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PS3 | Xbox 360 | Revolution | PS2 | GC | Xbox | PC | GBA | PSP | DS | Arcade | Retro

PREVIEW
THE WARRIORS
Rockstar indulges in a little gang warfare

PREVIEWED
- **HELLGATE: LONDON** [PC]
- **ELECTROPLANKTON** [DS]
- **DEAD RISING** [XB360]
- **BURNOUT LEGENDS** [PSP]
- **BLACK** [PS2/XB]



WAR OF THE WORDS
The big three play show and tell





REVIEW
DESTROY ALL HUMANS!
And how we learned to love the alien

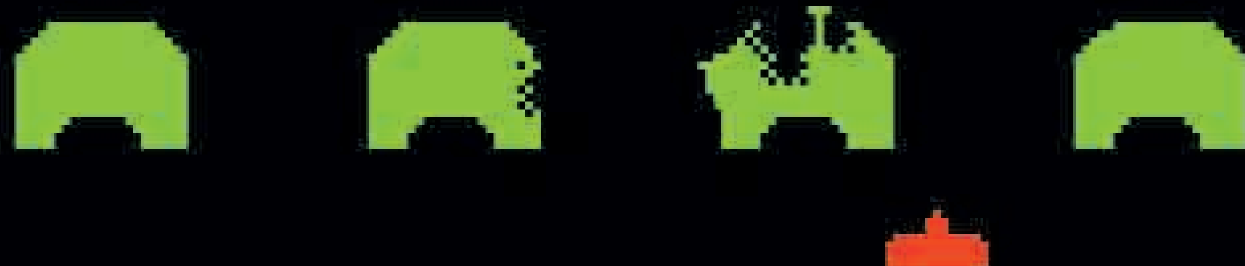

eMag

So, that was E3 2005 – the year when games were largely eschewed in favour in a three-way 'mine's bigger than yours' hardware competition. Microsoft is clearly closer to the finishing line, though some questions remain unanswered (wireless controllers at launch – are you sure?). Sony pulled out another tech demo in the hope we'd all forgotten that nonsense about the dinosaur and the 'Emotion Engine', while Nintendo stunned the world with the most beautiful lump of plastic we've ever seen.

But though we're excited about the possibilities of all three next-gen hardware devices, we remain cautiously optimistic about a gaming future that is hidden by smoke and mirrors. If the war of words is anything to go by, it's you, the consumers, that look set to benefit, as one thing is certain: all three companies are desperate to deliver the kind of hardware that was unimaginable just a few years ago. Who said war isn't good, eh?

Simon Phillips,
Group Editor




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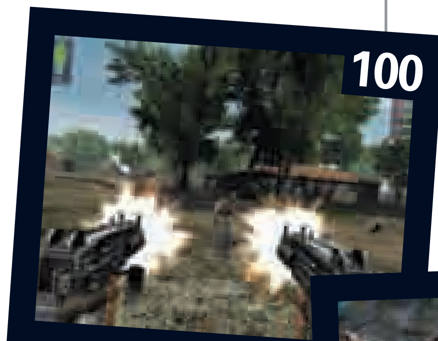
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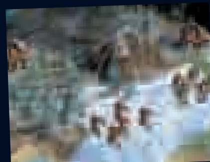
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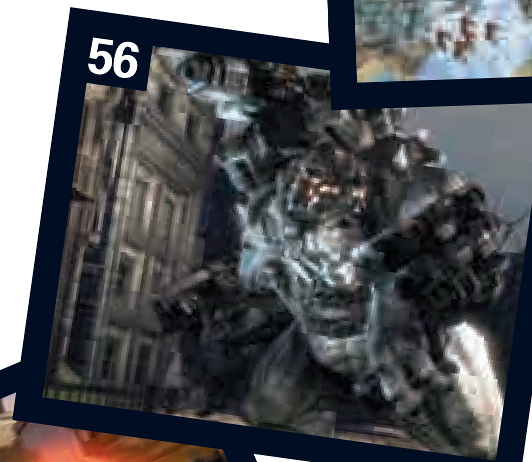
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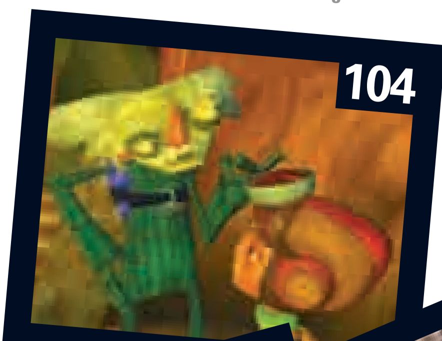


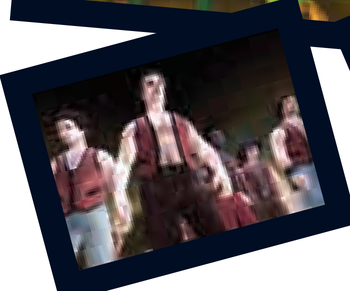


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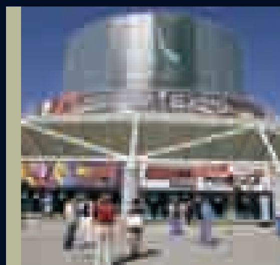
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Demons, dungeons and plenty of heroes – seems that life after Blizzard isn't all that different for the team at Flagship Studios

Hellgate: London

NEWS

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SMOKE AND MIRRORS

HARDWARE DOMINATES E3 AS CONSOLE GIANTS PUFF OUT THEIR CHESTS

Shows like this year's Electronic Entertainment Expo – much like the wealth of new console technology that it showcased – don't come along very often. Never mind the 70,000 people who invaded the Los Angeles Convention Center or the 5,000 interactive products that they drooled over for three days, E3 2005 was all about the hardware. Or, to be more specific, it was all about the peacock-style strutting that happens when new consoles are shown off – plenty of promises, but little proof.

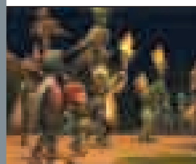
Despite having to 'go first', it was Sony's presentation of the PlayStation3 that caused the biggest stir. The sleekly curved machine impressed many, although eyebrows were raised at the redesigned DualShock pad – looking like the bastard son of Sony's original design and the Sidewinder pads Microsoft made for the PC, concerns were voiced over whether a design change was actually needed.

Eyebrows crept higher during the technical boasting (two teraflops of graphical power, 512Mb RAM and the Cell processor) and impressive graphical demonstrations; real-time renderings of the opening scene from *Final Fantasy VII* and a mud-splattered section of *Motorsport* were certainly eye-catching. Even so, those of us who were there were reminded of the presentation of the PS2 some seven years ago, when much was promised and then not delivered…

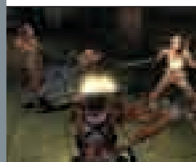
Most interestingly, Sony was clearly so busy that it all but forgot the future of the PlayStation Portable. Plenty of games were on the show floor but no mention was made of any plans for online play, web browsing or downloadable content; a disappointment, to say the least.

Closer to showing what it, and its console, is made of was Microsoft, as it actually had games for people to see. Few new details were revealed at its pre-show ▷

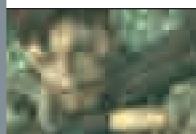
> "THE **PS3 IS NOT A GAME MACHINE**, WE'VE NEVER ONCE CALLED IT A GAME MACHINE – **IT'S A COMPUTER THAT'S MEANT FOR ENTERTAINMENT**"
>
> KEN KUTARAGI, COO, SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT



Square Enix would like to work with Nintendo.



Midway will support Xbox 360 after all.



Which special dinner will Snake be eating?

UNDERWIRED SUPPORT

WHO'S BACKING WHO IN THE NEXT CONSOLE WAR

SQUARE ROOT OF NINTENDO

Nintendo's bid to lure more publishers onto its next-generation systems (the DS and Revolution) saw a boost over E3, after Square Enix president Yoichi Wada said that he was keen to see his company offer "strong support" for its plans. Expressing enthusiasm for Nintendo's upcoming DS online services – which are expected to be compatible with the Revolution – Wada appears to be impressed with the service's ability to link friends together wherever they are in the world, because "it gives the image of taking the real world seamlessly into the virtual world". "What increased our interest further is that the next step is already being prepared for Revolution," Wada continued. "From here on, we'll have to challenge ourselves with content in response to what Nintendo offers." An online sequel to *Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles* is already in the works for the DS, though a Revolution version has yet to be announced.

MIDWAY BETWEEN CONFUSION

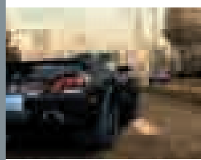
Midway, however, doesn't seem to be so sure about where it's looking to place its loyalties. A recent interview with CEO David Zucker suggested that the company wasn't planning to support the Xbox 360, preferring to focus its attention on releasing titles for Sony's console. "We're certainly going to have games for the launch of the PlayStation3," he said, "but we don't have any for the launch of the Xbox 360. It's a pretty small installed base and to really maximise – to get the performance out of the game – it's going to take some time to do that." Not surprisingly, just a day later, a 'Midway representative' quickly countered Zucker's comments by insisting that "Midway is fully supporting the Xbox 360 and we have games in development at all of our internal studios." A total of seven Xbox 360 games have since been announced, although none have been confirmed for the machine's November launch window.

KOJIMA DINES ALONE

On the PlayStation3 front, *Metal Gear Solid* creator Hideo Kojima has been expressing concerns over whether Sony's plans might be too advanced for some developers to handle. "My impression is that Sony is aiming for a very high level and I'm not sure if everyone can live up to that high standard," said Kojima, speaking to boomtown.net. Typically for the eccentric developer, he then expressed his impressions of each console as a metaphor. "PS3 would be like a dinner you only have once or twice a year on your anniversary," he said. "Xbox 360 will still be a special dinner, so you might have it two or three times a month, and Revolution is the kind of great dinner you have every day at home. They're all individual dinners, but it's not about what kind of dinner it is – more about how much the dinner will be and where you can have this dinner."

"WE CAN'T GET ALL **HUNG UP AS AN INDUSTRY** AND SAY IT'S ALL ABOUT **GRAPHIC FIDELITY** – THAT'S NOT GOING TO **SELL TO THE NEXT 100 MILLION PEOPLE**"
J ALLARD, CORPORATE VICE PRESIDENT, XBOX

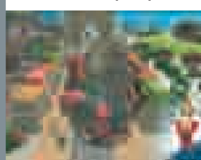
Nintendo's Revolution, Microsoft's Xbox 360 and Sony's PlayStation3 – this is the next generation of gaming. And very smart they are too.



Burnout 4 made a huge splash on EA's massive stand.



Epic's *Gears Of War* – *Halo* for the Xbox 360, perhaps?



conference as most people there already knew about the Xbox 360's design, removable fascias, dedication to HD-ready home entertainment equipment and online capabilities. One thing that did surprise was confirmation that the console would be backwards compatible with the Xbox, but even this isn't definite. Chief Xbox officer Robbie Bach left much to the imagination by saying that the "best-selling" Xbox titles would be compatible, suggesting that compatibility depends on the games you want to play.

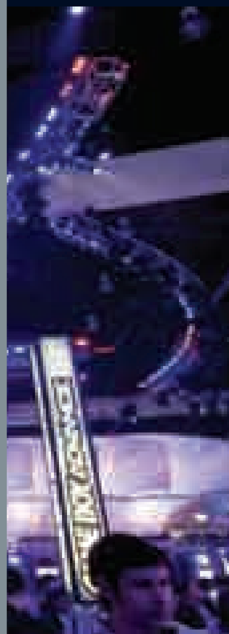
That said, the diversity of the first Xbox 360 games went some way to proving that Microsoft's machine may be widely popular. True, it might be a little heavy on the Western content for some (with only *Ninety-Nine Knights* and Square Enix's involvement with *Final Fantasy XI* providing true Japanese titles) as well as being rather sequel orientated, but the feedback for games like *Gears Of War*, *Condemned* and *Kameo* was, for the most part, hugely positive.

And so it came as little surprise that Nintendo remained relatively quiet about the Revolution – so quiet, in fact, that it revealed virtually nothing about the machine. "Revolution shares a common vision with Nintendo DS because the machine is just a tool," said Nintendo president Satoru Iwata. "The experience comes from the software." This software has yet to be announced, although you can assume that Nintendo will again rely on its tried and tested franchises.

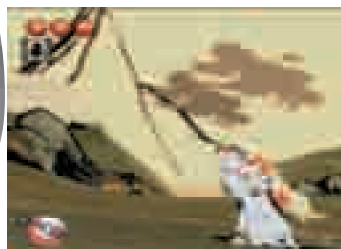
The lack of games, technical demos, controllers or even final console design notwithstanding, several facts were confirmed by Iwata, most importantly Nintendo's promise of the Revolution being backwards compatible not just with the GameCube but with the N64, SNES and NES through downloadable content. How this will work for games other than first-party titles remains to be seen, although it's likely that the company is already working on this. Promises also came on the industry front, with Iwata insisting that the Revolution is very developer-friendly and that it will be "a console where big ideas can prevail over big budgets".

Of course, you could suggest that a show where not one but three massively anticipated consoles are exhibited within hours of each other doesn't actually do E3 any good – no doubt many will complain that next year's event is a letdown simply because of the focus on software. But there's no denying that if there was ever a year to attend E3, this was it; it's just a question of whether everything we saw will turn out to be true.

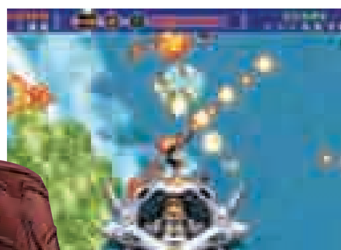




Nintendo had a strong hardware presence at the show.



Okami was deserving of its place as Best PS2 Game at E3, although *Shadow Of The Colossus* is great too.



Gunstar Super Heroes offers the same gameplay as before, while *Black* proved rather impressive.



It didn't come as a surprise that *Legend Of Zelda: Twilight Princess* was a highlight of the show.

BEST IN SHOW

GAME OF THE SHOW
Legend Of Zelda: Twilight Princess

BEST PS2 GAME
Okami

BEST XBOX GAME
Half-Life 2

BEST GAMECUBE GAME
Legend Of Zelda: Twilight Princess

BEST PC GAME
Spore

BEST GBA GAME
Gunstar Super Heroes

BEST DS GAME
Mario Kart DS

BEST PSP GAME
SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo

BEST XBOX 360 GAME
Gears Of War

BEST ACTION GAME
StarCraft: Ghost

BEST ADVENTURE GAME
Legend Of Zelda: Twilight Princess

BEST FPS GAME
Black

BEST RACING GAME
Burnout: Revenge

BEST RPG
Dragon Quest VIII

BEST SIMULATION GAME
Nintendogs

BEST STRATEGY GAME
Star Wars: Empire At War

BEST FIGHTING GAME
Soul Calibur III



NOT ANOTHER

GIZMONDO STORY

TIGER TO UNLEASH HANDHELD CONTRAPTION IN THE US

After a rather subdued launch in the UK a couple of months ago, the Gizmondo is to be released in the US. Now available in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Nordic territories, it's only really the machine's US launch that hangs in the balance – 11 August is the date that has been chosen and, according to Tiger Telematics, meetings at E3 have proved most useful in the run-up to the rollout. "The sales meetings conducted at the show have been tremendously productive," said Mike Morgan, global sales VP for Tiger. "There is a genuine excitement regarding the product from everyone we've met."

For once, this might actually not just be Americans getting over-excited at E3 – while it's no secret that we've not exactly been blown away by the Gizmondo, recent deals such as that struck with EA can only be beneficial for Tiger. With big names like *FIFA* and *SSX* available for the handheld, even the most casual of gamers will be able to see games that they recognise alongside the likes of *Colors* and *Momma Can I Mow The Lawn?*, and whether it actually is or not, the handheld at least seems like it should be in contention.

With a total of 89 games planned by the year's end, the future is a lot brighter for Tiger than we'd have reckoned a couple of months back. So yeah, good work. Now to see whether the rest of the world is gripped by Gizmondo fever…



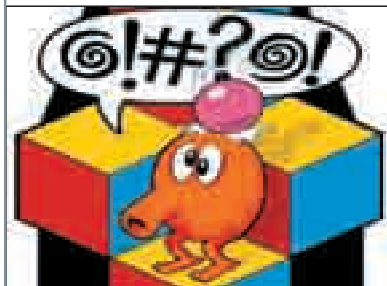
Data Stream
BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



BILL OF WRONGS
A bill designed to punish retailers caught selling adult-rated games to children has been passed in California. The bill, initially proposed by Leland Yee, a child psychologist determined to create laws aimed at protecting minors from violent games, was defeated last month following its original reading but was then passed on reconsideration with a majority vote of six to four. "For the same reason we don't allow kids to buy pornography, cigarettes or alcohol, we shouldn't allow them to buy videogames that teach them to do the things we put people in jail for," said Yee.



DORIS HAS HER DAY
Videogames are for kids? Try telling that to Doris Self of Fort Lauderdale, USA, who's out to reclaim the title of World's Oldest Videogame Champion. The 80-year-old first won the title in 1984 after becoming the World *Q*Bert* Champion aged 58. Now she wants to reclaim her crown from 72-year-old John Lawton, the current World *Depthcharge* Champion. "I was sad when I lost the title I had held for 20 years," said Doris. "My bridge-playing girlfriends think my *Q*bert* quest is strange, but this is my life and I don't plan to stop now."







NEW TRADE SHOWCASE TO REPLACE CANCELLED EVENTS

ON WITH THE SHOW

A new games trade show has been announced that is intended to fill the gaps in the UK industry calendar left by the cancellation of ECTS, Game Zone Live and, recently, the European Games Network (EGN). Games Market Europe, which will be held in London on 31 August and 1 September this year, is said to "herald a new era for the European games industry".

"After the confusion of the last couple of years, the games market has been asking for a single, focused, no-nonsense trade event – Games Market Europe is this event," said Andy Lane of Tandem Events, one of the new show's two co-ordinators. Lane has plenty of experience when it comes to games trade shows as he previously worked for CMP, the company that organised ECTS (the European Computer Game Show), the Game Developers Conference Europe (GDCE) and SCoRE. All three events were cancelled when CMP withdrew from the UK games scene earlier this year, though GDCE has been given a reprieve and will now be held some time in September.

As one of the few remaining games shows in the UK, Games Market Europe stands to attract a lot of exhibitors; indeed, Lane claims that ten per cent of the event's booths were sold before a floor plan had been devised.

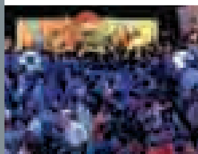
"The UK is the hub of the European games industry," said Andy Payne of Mastertronic Group, one of the companies that's already signed up for the show. "It's vital that we fly the flag and have the right event for business."

The new show has also gained the support of other areas of the industry. Roger Bennett, director general of publishers' group ELSPA, has said that it is "essential to have a UK trade event for Europe. The plans for Games Market Europe are clearly designed to ensure just that."

However, ELSPA has yet to give an official explanation for the cancellation of its EGN. A lack of exhibitor support was cited as the reason behind the no-show for ECTS and Game Zone Live, but the organisation is keeping quiet about the demise of the European Games Network.

> "THE UK IS THE **HUB OF THE EUROPEAN GAMES INDUSTRY**. IT'S VITAL THAT WE FLY THE FLAG AND HAVE **THE RIGHT EVENT FOR BUSINESS**"


Trade shows are becoming a thing of the past in the UK industry.


Consumer shows are a rarity too, after Game Zone Live was pulled.

MEET THE PATENTS

ACCUSATIONS FLY OVER SONY'S HANDLING OF PSP LAUNCH

With the UK launch of the PlayStation Portable just over two months away, some importers are up in arms over alleged legal threats from Sony over the importing of US and Japanese models of the handheld.

Leading the charge is ElectricBirdLand, a UK-based internet importer that has reportedly received 'cease and desist' orders from Sony Computer Entertainment's solicitors over what they claim are infringements of trademarks, brought about through the importing of PSPs for gamers in the UK and Europe. However, the owner of ElectricBirdLand has hit back, accusing Sony of failing to register several trademarks of its own including the names PSP (a trademark registered by Owtanet Ltd in 2000), UMD (owned by Olympus Corporation) and XMB, a PSP operating system component that isn't registered at all.

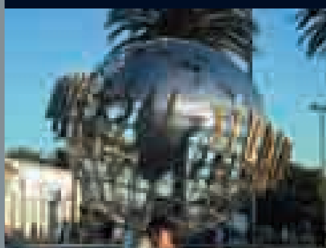
"SCE is well known for fudged product launches and this is another perfect example," said Dan Morelle, managing director of ElectricBirdLand. "The threat of legal action is not because Sony is concerned about the impact that small importers like us will have on its brand or sales, it's simply because of its inability to implement something so vital to the success of its new product."

Recent court rulings that Sony must pay over $90 million in damages to Immersion Corporation for violating some of its patents suggest that a similar situation could emerge if Morelle's claims turn out to be true. Unfortunately, Sony was unavailable for comment at the time of going to press.

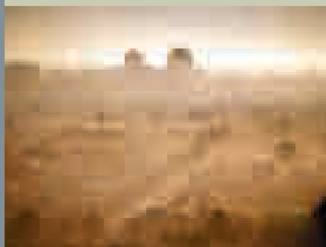
Mr Sony really doesn't like importing things. Allegedly.



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BEST THINGS ABOUT LA



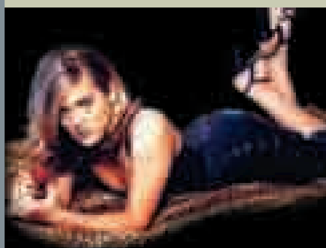
No.5 UNIVERSAL STUDIOS (LA)
Half the size, twice the price



No.4 SMOG
We don't enjoy breathing anyway



No.3 E3
The only reason we'd go there



No.2 ALICIA SILVERSTONE
She lives there and we love her



No.1 NOT LIVING THERE
Only 11 hours until we're home…

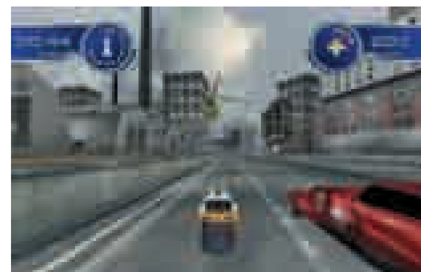
ZODIAC FAILS TO SEE INTO FUTURE OF HANDHELDS

PSYCHIC FAILURE

More proof that succeeding in the handheld market requires more than just a good idea: Tapwave has announced that it is to stop making the Zodiac. Originally pushing the Zodiac as a PDA with a wealth of gaming and multimedia capabilities, Tapwave's decision is a sensible move in the light of the recent Nintendo DS and upcoming Sony PSP launches.

Byron Connell, the company's vice president of marketing, confirmed that Tapwave would be changing from "offering Tapwave-branded retail products to developing new co-branded products". It will do this with a variety of partners, allowing the Zodiac technology to continue while preventing the standalone unit from being beaten even further into the ground by the competition – something that was already happening due to a combination of its high price and a lack of software.

"These partners will be introducing future multimedia products based on both the Zodiac technology platform and Tapwave's next-generation technologies," Connell said in a interview with Tapland, Tapwave's website. Although gaming support for the device will continue in limited form, it looks like the handheld market has spawned another failure… and we thought it would be Gizmondo that gave up first.



The Zodiac isn't completely dead. Merely resting. A lot.

Data stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



HIDEO GO SEEK

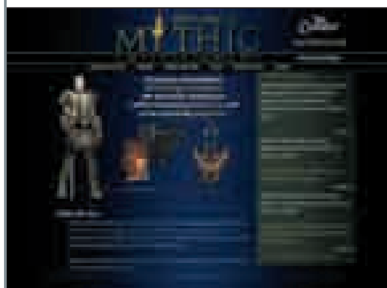
From 'a Hideo Kojima game' to 'a Hideo Kojima company' – everyone's favourite *Metal Gear Solid* creator is now heading up his own internal development studio at Konami, cunningly named Kojima Productions. What's more, the studio is currently working on three new *Metal Gear* games: *Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence* – a revamped version of the PS2 game for Xbox; a sequel to *Metal Gear Ac!d* for PSP; and *Metal Gear Solid 4*, a PS3-exclusive title that boasts online play. *MGS4* is expected to debut at E3 2006.

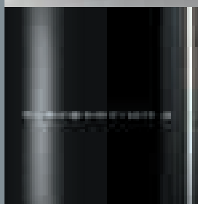




WAR IS OVER?

Bad news for anyone still hoping that Climax's on-again-off-again *Warhammer* MMORPG will come out – another developer has secured exclusive rights to develop a similar title. Best known for *Dark Age Of Camelot*, Mythic Entertainment is creating a massively multiplayer game based upon the popular Games Workshop licence, due for release some time in 2007. "*Warhammer* fans can be assured that our partnership with Mythic will result in a truly compelling online experience," said Games Workshop's Andy Jones.





Cell should be able to support some breathtaking visual effects.



Toshiba hopes to have the Cell in TVs next year.

IBM SPILLS THE BEANS ON NEW PLAYSTATION3 CHIP

CELL GETS UNLOCKED

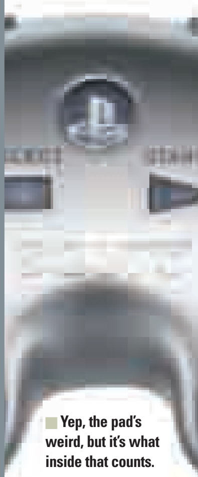
With much of the gaming community still mulling over the E3 PlayStation3 demo reel and trying to establish just how powerful the machine will be, IBM has picked a good time to let the world in on the secrets of the Cell chip that will power the new Sony console. Interestingly, only two of the three partners (the chip has been developed by IBM, Sony and Toshiba) are set to actively use the new technology. IBM's design team has said that while there are no plans to use the chip in its own systems, there will be a team whose job it is to help others use Cell technology. "Our intention is to open up the Cell software architecture," said Jim Kahle of IBM. "The idea is to get the industry to help us evolve the basic software layers."

It's evident that the three companies wish to see a widespread uptake of the Cell, but taking it to developers first seems to be the logical leg-up in getting coders established with the new technology. However, the chip is incredibly power-hungry, so many sources have already ruled it out of use in handheld devices. There are problems at the other end of the spectrum too – currently only two Cell processors can be linked without significant work, potentially limiting the chip's supercomputer uses.

Exact specifications for the chip could be with developers by the time you read this; these should help potential users understand the complexities of the new technology and possibly convince at least a few of them that Cell is the way to go. Just to make sure, the partnership is looking to release open-source software libraries for the chip later in the year but there are a lot of things still to be decided. "We're not yet sure about the right licensing terms for the libraries," Kahle said. "It can be hard to give stuff away for free."

But rather than computer use, appliances are being tipped as Cell's forte. Its use in the PS3 will likely do wonders for the chip, while Toshiba plans to use it in TVs by next year and analysts are touting the likes of set-top boxes and servers as the perfect home for Cell. This year should be interesting for the once-unlikely partnership of Sony, Toshiba and IBM.

> **"THE CHIP IS VERY POWER-HUNGRY**, SO MANY HAVE **RULED OUT ITS USE IN HANDHELD SYSTEMS"**



Yep, the pad's weird, but it's what inside that counts.

ELSPA TRADE SHOW GETS BIG-NAME BACKING

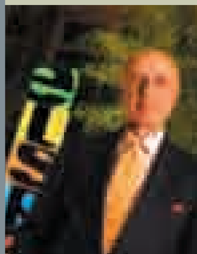
SHOW US WHAT YOU'VE GOT

With the International Games Summit just around the corner, ELSPA has announced the all-star line-up that will be speaking at the conference. The latest additions to the schedule are SCE UK managing director Ray Maguire, EA Europe vice president Rory Armes and Nintendo UK's general manager, David Yarnton, all of whom will form a panel discussing exactly what makes a game globally successful. We're guessing MC Harvey won't get a mention, then.

Already confirmed to speak at the show are representatives of NCsoft, SCEE, Vodafone and Microsoft as well as Adrian Hall from the Department for Education and Skills. While the department itself is a co-sponsor of the event, Hall will speak about the use of computer games in the field of education.

While nowhere near as exciting for the general public as shows like E3, the International Games Summit is set to highlight the finer points of the industry for people in other entertainment sectors.

"As we enter a new chapter in the history of computer and videogames, the insights and opinions of the industry's leaders will make essential listening for anyone with a stake in the industry," said Roger Bennett, ELSPA's director general. "In addition, the Summit offers an unparalleled opportunity for decision makers in convergent industries such as film, music and books to get to grips with the business potential for creating new IP in the gaming sector."



ELSPA's Roger Bennett celebrating 400th games™ news page appearance.

UNDER THE HAMMER?

UBISOFT CONSIDERS HOLLYWOOD BUYOUT

Despite being the second largest games publisher in Europe, Ubisoft would consider a takeover bid by a major Hollywood player if the situation arose. Speaking to French newspaper *La Tribune*, Ubisoft chief executive Yves Guillemot described the idea of being picked up by a large American firm like Time Warner or Disney as "a solution which could be, for us, fairly interesting." But it's not just movie studios that Ubisoft would be willing to court.

Guillemot went on to say that a buyout would be just as possible with a publisher of equal standing. With this comment, all eyes naturally fall on Ubisoft's only European superior, Electronic Arts (which already owns a 20 per cent stake in the French company), but Guillemot wasn't giving anything away. "We talk to each other from time to time but we have not been in contact for several weeks," he said, going on to reassure people that there was no imminent danger of a takeover. "We would like to remain independent because it is the best solution, especially for our shareholders."

Having said a few months ago that Ubisoft would resist all takeovers, is this the first sign of a climbdown?



GAMES ROOM 101

THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF VIDEOGAMING



NO. 33: OLD FRIENDS, BETTER GAMES

Bosses, eh? A key element in most great games. Enemies that push your abilities, test your reflexes and require that little bit more than some button mashing to defeat. For some, the chance to merely see these invariably enormous foes is enough to push them onward through a title – but occasionally it goes horribly wrong.

We speak of the instances where you're forced to fight a string of already beaten bosses again as you approach the end credits. What's the point? You already know you can beat them; it's more a test of patience than anything else. It really does make you want to weep.

Although many titles such as *Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker* and *The House Of The Dead 2* have abused gamers in this manner, it's Capcom that stands tall as the main offender. *Viewtiful Joe* and *Devil May Cry 3* are both recent culprits and the company seems to be of the opinion that the *Mega Man* games would be incomplete without this feature. We say again, there's no point. At best, it's annoying. At worst, it makes it look like you can't be bothered to think up decent new enemies. Please, no more. We beg you.



So many bosses, so little time… which is probably why *Viewtiful Joe* put them all at the end of the game, just to be spiteful.

Devil May Cry 3 does something similar, although at least you get some choice over which order you fight them in.

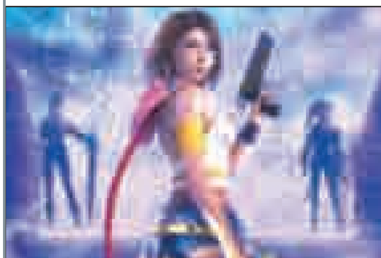
Data Stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC

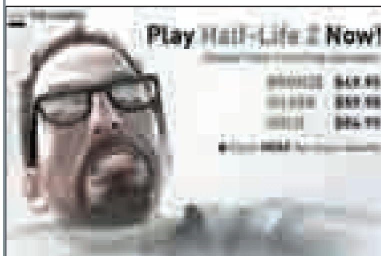
Square Enix has announced a deal with Apple's iTunes music network in the US to allow users to download albums based on the *Final Fantasy* series. The selection, ranging from albums dedicated to each game (from the original *Final Fantasy* through to *FFXI*) to recordings of live concerts and even two albums from The Black Mages (composer Nobuo Uematsu's guitar rock band), can be downloaded from the Square Enix webpage within iTunes. Nothing has been confirmed for the UK iTunes network, but the publisher has said that talks are underway to arrange a similar deal here.

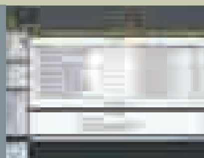




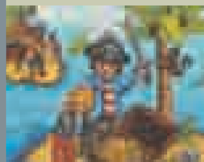
GIVE ME STEAM

Speculation over who Valve will choose as its new publishing partner has flared up after it was revealed that *Half-Life 2: Aftermath* (an add-on for the popular sequel) will be released through retail as well as on Steam, the developer's online download network. Valve's split from Vivendi Universal led some to believe that *Aftermath* would only be available through Steam, but with Valve's Doug Lombardi confirming the retail release at E3, an announcement is expected soon over who will be handling the publishing duties.





Piratical programmers have been quick to exploit the PSP's capabilities.





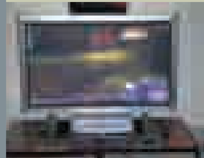
PLAYSTATION PIRATABLE?

FIRST PSP GAMES HIT THE NET

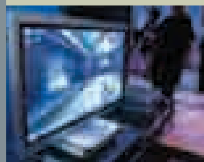
It was only a matter of time, really. The first PSP ROM images have found their way onto the internet courtesy of renowned pirate group Paradox. But the good news for Sony is that there's no way of playing these illegal games. Ripped to the same ISO format as standard CDs and DVDs, the files are doing the rounds in various peer-to-peer and torrent circles although some foresight on Sony's part will prevent their use. Well, for another few weeks at least…

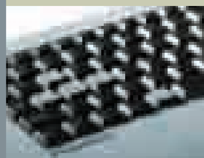
As UMD and Memory Stick applications are run in different ways, it's going to take real dedication from the hackers to get pirate software running, not to mention the fact that programs made to run off the Memory Stick have to be authorised and signed by Sony. The only loophole thus far lies with the original Japanese PSPs that run the v1.0 firmware – a massive oversight on Sony's part means the original model is capable of running unsigned software, such as the emulators and homebrew games that are flooding out at a ridiculous rate.

But Sony is no slouch – new PSP games are coming loaded with firmware updates that render unsigned code useless. Even so, the harder Sony pushes against them, the more hackers will work to get around any preventative measures. Already, there are reports of loopholes that could be exploited, such as the browser in *WipEout Pure*, so Sony is going to have to stay on its toes if it wants to avoid a broadside from the pirates.



Doesn't that TV look better with a Phantom under it? Um, doesn't it?





Look – it's got a keyboard and everything. How can you not want one?

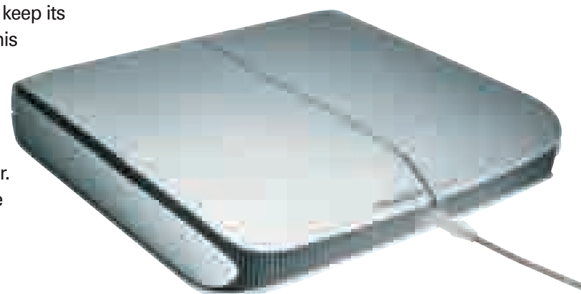
INFINIUM'S PHANTOM IN E3 NO-SHOW 'SHOCKER'

GHOST TOWN

The 'will it/won't it?' saga continues as Infinium Labs' much-anticipated (ahem) Phantom console failed to appear at E3. Naturally, this no-show has set tongues wagging across the gaming world but Infinium president Kevin Bachus is adamant that not only is the machine still in the works but also that it will launch later this year.

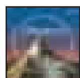
After the machine's surprise unveiling at last year's E3 (where it was even nominated for best hardware of the show), it looked as though the subject of much mockery might actually make it to retail. But Infinium will need substantial investment if it is to keep its head above water, let alone launch this console. A report filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission back in April stated that $11.5 million would be needed before any kind of launch could occur. Yet Bachus seems convinced that the Phantom will pull through, citing three sources of income – namely hardware, content and subscription fees (which have been quoted at $19.95 a month for a minimum of two years).

"Between those three revenue streams, we feel very confident that we're going to be able to deliver not only value to the consumer but to our shareholders as well," Bachus said. But while testing of the machine might be "near complete", it's going to take a hefty investment if the Phantom is going to be given at shot at proving its critics wrong.



Data stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING

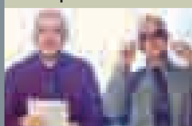


SERMON ON THE PARAMOUNT

Sony's line-up for PSP movie releases grows stronger by the day, with Paramount Pictures now adding its support to that of Buena Vista and Lions Gate in providing UMD content for the handheld. Beginning in August, Paramount will launch a number of UMD films in the US including *Sahara*, *Team America*, *The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie* and *Without A Paddle*. Deals signed with Comedy Central and Nickelodeon also allow Paramount to provide a variety of UMD television releases as well, such as *Viva La Bam*, *Ren & Stimpy*, *South Park*, *SpongeBob SquarePants* and *Chapelle's Show*. Unfortunately, details of a European launch for the same titles were unavailable at the time of going to press.



It's about games but it's not crap. Excellent.



CULT VIDEOGAME SHOW TO HIT BBC IN NOVEMBER





The new face of games shows? Please, God, no…

CONSOLE YOURSELF

If you're still whining about how they don't make decent TV shows about videogames then you've clearly not seen *Consolevania*, a home-grown programme that's garnered a cult following since first appearing on the internet in February last year. The show, created by a dedicated team of gamers appalled at the lack of quality gaming programming, has covered eight episodes so far (all available from the official website, www.consolevania.com) and is about to begin its second season at its new home, www.thefraudcast.com, on 30 June.

If you can't get access to the webcasts, though, you don't need to worry – the *Consolevania* team has been commissioned by BBC Scotland to create a spin-off show due to air some time in November. How the BBC's involvement will change the show's style (not least its cast of characters including Adolf Hitler, Peter Molyneux and serial killer John Wayne Gacy) remains to be seen, but have faith that *Consolevania* will remain as funny and informative as ever.

"The show has cost us money, killed all our spare time and has almost got us arrested and kicked to a pulp," said Robert Florence, one of the driving forces behind the programme. "But we're all so very proud of it. People seem to love it, and we have a global audience. Maybe this season, games publishers will give us loads of free stuff in an effort to buy our favour, because if it's not on *Consolevania*, it's not cool."

CREATE YOUR OWN

SEARCH IS ON FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT TALENT

Thought the days of bedroom coding were long gone? Think again. Thanks to the delights of Flash and Java, it's still alive and well. With this in mind, Channel 4 has launched a competition to find the best amateur coders in the country through its gaming website, 4Games (www.channel4.com/games). Over the next six months, the site will be giving budding developers the opportunity to gain recognition on a national platform, as well as the chance to win a top-of-the-range PC and £1,000 in cash.

"Our site commissions games from established agencies and we want to showcase talent from new, unknown sources too," said Catherine Jackson, site editor of 4Games. "Given that these games will most likely be written in people's spare time or by students, we're not expecting advanced graphics or complex storylines; what we're looking for is evidence of the writer's creativity and originality of concept."

The competition runs until 6 November; full details are on www.channel4.com/gameguru.

"say what you see"

Meaningless waffle from the industry

THIS MONTH Ian Pearson, head of futurology at BT, makes sure everyone knows just how powerful the PlayStation3 is:

"Sony's new computer games console is, in terms of processing, one per cent as powerful as a human brain"

gamesTM says: Or 75 per cent, going by some of the people we met in the US. Who knows, if George W Bush can make it into the White House, who says we won't see a PS3 there in 2008?

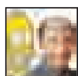
MORE FROM MR CHIPS NEXT MONTH!

Data Stream
BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



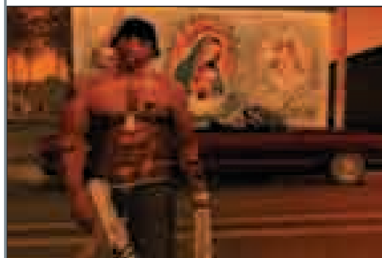
SQUARE PEG, X-SHAPED HOLE

European console owners with a hankering for *Final Fantasy XI* will be pleased at the news that Square Enix's MMORPG is finally heading this way – albeit on the Xbox 360. Having scrapped plans for an Xbox release following problems agreeing terms with Microsoft over the implementation of its PlayOnline service through Xbox Live, Square Enix is in the process of completing the game for Xbox 360's launch in November. Unfortunately, the game will not be enhanced over its PlayStation2 and PC counterparts, aside from the obvious inclusion of HDTV support.



ONE TRUE VOICE

Two unions representing actors who provide game voice-overs want their members to be paid more. Recent talks broke down, creating the threat of a strike, but industry figures say the actors are being unreasonable. "Voice-over work represents a small fraction of a videogame's development and consumer enjoyment," said Howard Fabrick, a lawyer representing various publishers. However, though only 15 per cent of games are made under union agreements, this minority included nine of 2004's ten best-selling titles.



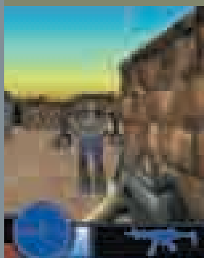


Nokia's new technology should make games more widely available.

Mobile Game Of The Month



It's not often that we're impressed by a mobile phone game enough to resurrect this section but this month we've been party to something quite special. *Rise Of War* is an FPS – a simple one, admittedly, but it's running on a phone. Go figure. Essentially a portable version of *Doom*, Synergenix's shooter can be a bit fiddly on some handsets but the ability to flip aspect (from portrait to landscape) on supported phones makes the game even more enjoyable. The genre may not be best suited to mobiles but this is up there with the likes of *Ashen* for N-Gage and even *Doom/Doom II* for GBA.





NOKIA TO 'GAME UP' FUTURE HANDSETS

SMART BOMB

Despite 'enjoying' limited success with the N-Gage and slightly less embarrassing N-Gage QD, Finnish phone firm Nokia has unveiled its plan to regain dominance of the handset market. A new generation of gaming-enabled smartphones will allow players to run games off a memory card, link to a PC to fill their phone with games and even download titles over a wireless connection.

Nokia also plans to put out a new set of development tools which it claims will standardise mobile development, making games compatible with more handsets without the need for them to be recoded.

This new generation of handheld technology is expected to arrive early next year. In the meantime, Nokia has high hopes for the first wave of smartphones, predicting sales of a massive 25 million handsets by the end of this year.

But even though Nokia will be branching out into an entire catalogue of similarly powered gaming phones, the company says the N-Gage will still be a supported platform. New titles and accessories are planned and the prospect of a limited edition silver handset (as opposed to the existing grey one) has us jumping for joy. Ah, wait, no we're not. Sorry.

DEAL TO TAKE MOBILE GAMES TO THE WORLD STAGE

FORMER MFORMA PERFORMERS

In a bid to take it one step closer to global supremacy, mobile games publisher MFORMA has signed an agreement with distributor Telcogames that will see its titles released in over 30 countries. While the deal primarily concerns European territories, moving into countries like Turkey, Oman and South Africa will help build the reputation and profile of the mobile firm.

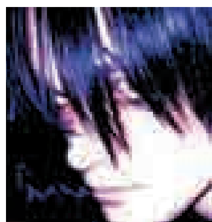
"We have been working with Telcogames for over a year with good results," MFORMA's Eric Hobson told gamesindustry.biz. "We are pleased to continue our co-operation and enhance our distribution footprint beyond the major carriers."

MFORMA's catalogue of games is a mixed bag, from big names like *Call Of Duty* and *The Italian Job* to ideas that should never have left the drawing board – *Popeye Kart Racer*, anyone? But if the games don't take your fancy, fret not. Under the new agreement, Telcogames will also be distributing all manner of mobile frivolity – wallpapers, ringtones and applications galore that should help us keep our minds off that bloody frog.




eMag





LETTER FROM AMERICA

WITH GENUINE AMERICAN BRANDON SHEFFIELD

"THE MOST INTERESTING ARCADE GAME WE HAVE IS HYPERBOWL EXTRA. IT'S NOT EASY, NOT FUN IF YOU'RE NOT DRUNK,

So, for better or for worse, I'm not your friendly ex-patriot The Shape. My friendliness is debatable, I'm far from a patriot, and as for the ex bit, well, there's a line of girls that will confirm that status, and rightfully so. I do, however, live in America, as I've done since I was thrust from the womb and given one life with which to do my worst. I think this was my mother's way of getting back at someone because she's pissed at her mother for giving birth to her. Perpetuate the misery, and all that. All of this by way of saying: I'm writing your America column as an American. I hope that doesn't disturb you. I'm not the gun-toting, flag-waving kind, as humorous as I'm sure that would be. I'm more the tree-hugging, meat-eschewing, way-too-in-touch-with-his-feminine-side type of American. The type that lives in, wait for it, San Francisco.

The idea of writing a column about America is a bit odd to me. Seems to me, most sensible Americans would much rather not talk about it at all. On my last trip to Europe, I was constantly mistaken for a German. As sniggered-at as the bratwurst-swilling Deutchlanders are, I actually much preferred it to being labelled an American tourist, who might at any moment bust out his flower-print Hawaiian shirt, khaki pants and straw hat, as is his manifest destiny.

But I guess you'll be wanting that column then. Here goes. My girlfriend works at an arcade. Does yours? Okay, perhaps not, that's getting us off on the wrong foot. I got a little abrasive and boastful, and I apologise for it. You know how we Americans are, yes? Am I playing to the stereotype sufficiently? Am I being sufficiently obnoxious with my overuse of the word American? I've got to give you some flavour of what it's like to be here, or else I guess this column is completely useless, isn't it?

Getting back on a more right-oriented foot, and continuing a clumsy but well-meaning segue, let me tell you about our arcade situation over here in God's America. These machines, which once stood for gaming excellence, and represented the pinnacle of top-end graphics and sound, and peppered the land like so many discarded McDonald's wrappers, now barely exist. Do you even have arcades in the UK any more? I saw one in France and almost vomited in disinterest. They did have a couple of shooter cabinets, though, and with hand-made labels that read 'Raiden Figther one and two!!'. Perfect for stress relief when you have a 'figth' with your old lady. Bring the kids, it's fun for the whole family! That arcade was little more than an under-populated relic of times gone by. Ours have been relegated to pre-movie entertainment, or subtle fronts for various China Town drug rings

Our American-made arcade cabinets all have to do with gambling, prize redemption or Eugene Jarvis (you know – once made *Defender*, now makes *Target Terror*). The one interesting thing we do have, in one northern California arcade, is



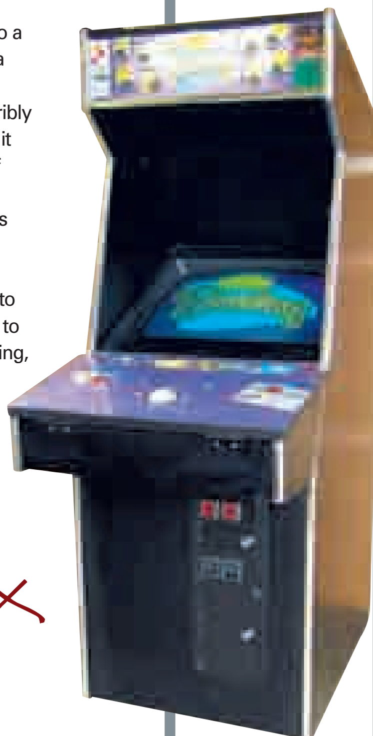
– A BOWLING SIMULATOR WITH A BIT BUT HEY, IT'S THE BEST WE'VE GOT"

Hyperbowl. It's a bowling simulator with a bit extra. You roll the virtual ball by spinning an actual bowling ball mounted in a podium. The virtual ball then rolls through a variety of terrains – from a forest, to a pirate ship, to Tokyo, to San Francisco itself – on its merry way to a standard set of pins. Obstacles, in the form of cars, fire hydrants, trolleys and hills, block or alter your passage. It's not easy, not horribly fun if you're not drunk, but hey, it's the best we've got. And to cap it off, in 2002 a regional paper awarded *Hyberbowl* the distinction of being the best bowling for people with bad backs.

Indeed, where the lure of the arcade was once superior graphics and sound, the only thing it's got left is novelty and proprietary controls. Medal and redemption games will be around as long as there remain kids who would rather spend $5 on a game in order to win a 50-cent set of false teeth, rather than just spend the 50 cents to begin with. But the day of the arcade fighting game is slowly passing, very sadly. Arcades one-up consoles with their superior dance mats, extravagant lightguns, mo-cap and unique input devices. But with the EyeToy, *DDR* mats and the like, one wonders how long arcades will be able to maintain even that edge. Suffice to say: support your local arcade if you're lucky enough to have one. If you don't, who knows how long it'll still be around?

Many thanks

Brandon X



Low-impact sport with even less impact? Love it…

LOVE ABOUT AMERICA…

Friendly Girls



HATE ABOUT AMERICA…

Bull-headed Ignorance



AMERIKAAN

PRODUCTS, PLACES, SERVICES AND EVENTS FROM THE LAND OF THE FREE

EMERIL LIVE

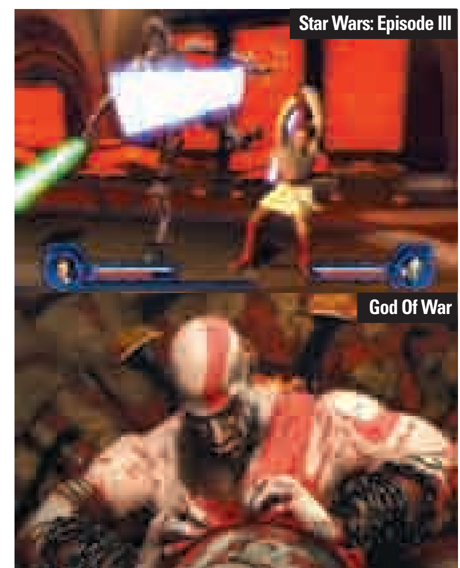


You have Delia Smith, we have Emeril Lagasse – a New Orleans chef so boisterous and outspoken, Matt Groening based a *Futurama* character on him just to poke fun. Problem is, the parody isn't actually that far from the truth. Emeril constantly tells us to 'kick it up a notch', 'bams' pretty much all his ingredients, and insists on using 'everything but the oink' when it comes to cooking pork. What a guy.

US MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

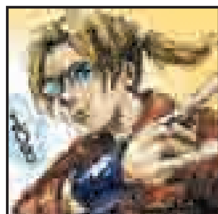
	Title	Publisher	Format
1	Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	Rockstar	PS2
2	Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	Rockstar	Xbox
3	Star Wars: Episode III ROTS	Activision	PS2
4	Star Wars: Episode III ROTS	Activision	Xbox
5	Doom 3	Activision	Xbox
6	God Of War	SCEA	PS2
7	Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory	Ubisoft	PS2
8	Star Wars: Battlefront	Activision	PS2
9	Gran Turismo 4	SCEA	PS2
10	Fight Night: Round 2	Electronic Arts	PS2

(Updated 25/05/05)



Star Wars: Episode III

God Of War



KONGETSU*

WITH JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT TIM ROGERS

"THE KING OF FIGHTERS SERIES HAS DITCHED ITS YEAR-INCLUSIVE SAYS SNK OF AMERICA, IT'S EMBARRASSING WHEN KOF

Did you hear they're location-testing the new *King Of Fighters* game in Akihabara tomorrow? Did you even know there was a new *King Of Fighters* game? Most people didn't, and a lot of people who'd be semi-interested won't see it tomorrow because the announcement was made a few minutes ago. No screens have been revealed, only the title – *The King Of Fighters XI*. The series has ditched its year-inclusive naming system because, says SNK of America, it's embarrassing when *King Of Fighters 2003* appears late in 2004…

So what's to expect from this new *King Of Fighters*? It will be on Sammy's Atomiswave hardware, and chances are, this time, it might have gotten around to making good on its promise to make a game that looks as smooth as *Guilty Gear*. Other than that, I don't know.

There's a game I don't get – *Guilty Gear*. The characters are so exuberant and twitchy to the point that it makes me feel kind of sick to watch it in motion. That, and I don't understand the name. What would a gear have to be guilty about? *Bloody Roar*, too. How can a roar be bloody? (If you're British and there's a tiger outside your window at three in the morning perhaps? Ha ha!) I can't get behind games with weird names and/or weird characters. You may think this sounds kind of stupid.

I met an American in Tokyo a while back who told me that he always wanted to come to Japan because people here "like" and "understand" "things" like *Guilty Gear*. A tourist, he was looking at *Gundam* models in a shop window when he asked me and my friend if we lived here and if we knew where he could get such and such a game. We took him on for the journey, and that was when he regaled us with tales of guilty gears.

Guess what, though? If you draw a line and put the Japanese people who like or hate *Guilty Gear* on one side and the people who don't know what the hell it is on the other, you'd find that the ignorant outnumber the informed by tens of thousands to one. This is very important: videogames are plentiful here, though only if you know where to look.

Akihabara and otaku are rather dirty words in Japan. If you come to Akihabara you may be surprised by all the drawings of naked little girls with enlarged body parts plastered over shop walls. My favourite arcade, Hirose Entertainment Yard (HEY), has a hentai anime shop in the basement, with more than a hundred copies of the same poster (changed weekly) all around the entrance. I've noticed over the course of years of HEY patronage that the girls' eyes and nipples are getting bigger at frightening ratios. "I like *King Of Fighters* because it's clean," a guy once told me. "The characters grow up realistically year to year. That sort of thing." The series is fading in Japan.



TEACH YOURSELF JAPANESE

LESSON THIRTY THREE	BEING A BADASS IN FRONT OF THE DOCTOR
Ja, netsu ga attan deshou..	So, you say you had a fever.
Souda. Yonjuuichido dake.	Yeah, just 41 degrees (Celsius).
Souka. Ima netsu hakatte miyouka.	You don't say. Well, let's check your temperature.
Ee, yonjuuichido da, mada. Kore mikkakan tsuzuiteta ka? Omae wa shinda kanousei ga atta!	Whoa, it's still 41 degrees. You say this has been going on for three days? You could have died!
Shindenai kedo.	I ain't dead. [This sounds so much cooler in Japanese, really.]

NAMING SYSTEM BECAUSE, 2003 APPEARS IN LATE 2004"

Just a few weeks back at HEY, a shooting game called *Senkou no Ronde* was released. Normally when a new shooter is up at HEY, you see some guy beating it on day one, credit one, because he's that cool. *Senkou no Ronde* confused all who witnessed it. It's neither horizontal nor vertical – it's orbital, with a human opponent occupying the centre you orbit around. It plays like an overhead shooter, only you're trying to hit a human opponent. If it doesn't sound brilliant, it's because you've never played a shooter. It's the most ingenious pure game concept to come along since perhaps *Super Mario 64*. And the characters – pilots of giant robots though they are – are all clean and not ridiculous looking at all.

A few days after *Senkou no Ronde* came out, *Famitsu* magazine gave *Nintendogs* a perfect 40/40 score, saying, among other things, that "it's not even like a videogame at all!" There are those who speak of an impending crash in the Japanese games industry. I'll only hint at it.

Kind regards

Tim Rogers

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

'What is a 'location test'?' you may ask. Basically it means they put one cabinet (one back-to-back set of cabinets in the case of a fighter) housing a more-or-less complete version of a game in an arcade. Then the arcade employees watch it unrelentingly while guys who are too clued-in to the release of games the likes of which get location-tested stand around silently, arms crossed, waiting to play. You play one credit, and when you lose, it's the back of the line for you. As Japanese guys who monitor SNK's website daily are not normally the kind of people to, you know, talk in public settings, I'm not sure the publishers of the games ever get any feedback.

The game being location tested, as I've said, is more or less complete. It's more of an advertising move than anything else. The guys at SNK normally know what to fix on their own, anyway; I take it they play the games themselves. I guess the purpose of location-testing a game is to make sure no one starts screaming or revolting at the sight of it. If that happens, well, I don't know what happens next. Probably something like what happened with *Capcom Fighting Jam*, which got delayed for almost two years.

JAPANESE MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	Front Mission Online	Square Enix	PS2
2	Romancing SaGa: Minstrel Song	Square Enix	PS2
3	Eternal Aselia: End Of This Earth	Nippon Ichi	DS
4	Nintendogs: Shiba & Friends	Nintendo	DS
5	Baseball Live 2005	Namco	PS2
6	Mobile Suit Gundam: 1 Year War	Bandai	PS2
7	Nintendogs: Dachs & Friends	Nintendo	DS
8	Naruto: Saikyou Ninja Daikesshuu	Tomy	DS
9	Nintendogs: Chihuahua & Friends	Nintendo	DS
10	Derby Time	SCE	PSP

(Week ending 15/05/05 © 2005 Media Create Co. Ltd. All Rights Reserved)


Front Mission Online
Nintendogs

THINK TANK

THE PEOPLE IN THE GAMES INDUSTRY TELL IT LIKE IT IS…

HOORAY FOR HOLLYWOOD?



Despite having worked in the games industry for nearly a decade, this year saw my first visit to E3 – that hallowed place that many 'normal' gamers would sell their own mothers to visit, while most of the industry sees it split between a jolly and a lot of hard work. Personally, I can't see what all the fuss is about, at least in terms of how exhausting the whole charade is; while some of my colleagues came back moaning about their week in the sun, I was brimming with smiles. There's one thing I've learnt, however: if you're looking for a horrible place to visit, you can't do much worse than LA.

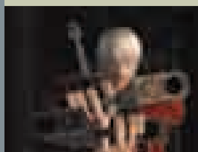
Okay, maybe that's an exaggeration – there are probably a few war zones that might be worse. But the combination of overly fake inhabitants, stupidly high prices and the fact that everything's so spread out makes it a nightmare to negotiate. Finding a specific location usually requires plenty of forward planning and money (you can't get a taxi anywhere for less than $25, it seems) and even when you get there, there's no guarantee you'll find what you're after. It took me three days just to find a branch of Electronics Boutique, at which point I had the option of buying what I was after for $50 new or $48 second-hand. Really.

On the plus side, I didn't really get much time to myself to mull over these issues – three days solid spent wandering around the LA Convention Center, dodging the hundreds of Americans who felt it necessary to stand in my way, and playing anything I could lay my hands on at least kept me out of the sun and kept my wallet firmly in my pocket. Didn't stop me spending over $500 on, well, not very much though…

Mr X feels overworked and underpaid by his overlords in the games industry. He chooses to remain anonymous.

FROM THE FRONT

GOOD NEWS FOR CAPCOM AS PROFITS SOAR, THOUGH JAPANESE GAME SALES SLOW DOWN DRAMATICALLY



There was no way Capcom could lose with the combination of *Resident Evil 4* and *Devil May Cry 3*.

OVERSEAS SALES GIVE THE JAPANESE COMPANY'S FIGURES A BOOST

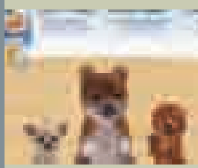
CAPCOM HAS NOTHING TO CRY ABOUT

Things are looking up for Japanese publisher Capcom. The company has recently announced its full-year financial results and they've shown that the company has managed to turn around the huge losses it suffered last year to rake in a profit of ¥3.6 billion (over £18 million).

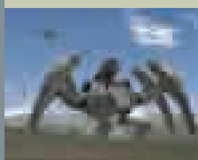
The overall revenue for the year ending 31 March 2005 was up by 25 per cent on the year before, something that's credited to the strong overseas sales that the company has enjoyed lately. Although at home in Japan Capcom has seen titles such as *Monster Hunter*, *GTA: San Andreas* (the company owns the publishing rights in Japan) and the latest *Rockman* games performing well, it's titles such as *Devil May Cry 3* and *Resident Evil 4* that have wowed the overseas crowds and pulled in much of the cash.

Capcom is now predicting its net profit to rise slightly to ¥3.9 billion (nearly £20 million) over the next year, thanks once more to increased overseas sales. This estimate is probably fairly accurate as Capcom has some huge titles coming up, including *Killer7* and some new instalments in the acclaimed *Viewtiful Joe* series. As well as these games, the company's first next-gen title – zombie-fest *Dead Rising* – will also be released on the Xbox 360 and the PlayStation2 version of *Resident Evil 4* should be yet another hit (if the massive success of the game on the GameCube is an indicator).

This recent success must be a relief after the ¥9.2 billion (£47 million) loss of last year. With the quality titles Capcom has provided of late, we certainly feel that it deserves a bit of good news.



It may be cute, but should *Nintendogs* really be cluttering up the charts?



IT'S TOUGH AT THE TOP

POOR TITLES BLAMED FOR SALES SLUMP IN JAPAN

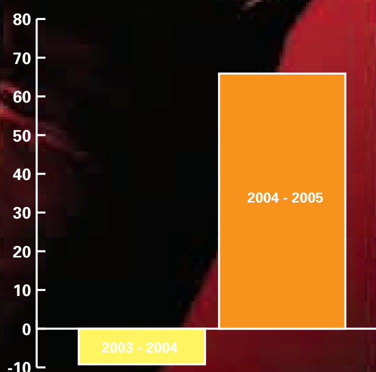


A major drop in sales has seen Japanese weekly games sales figures slump to their lowest level in three and a half years. Although Square Enix's latest title, the massively multiplayer *Front Mission Online*, entered the charts at number one in May, sales were otherwise sluggish. Nippon Ichi's *Eternal Astelia: At The End Of The Earth* was the only other new release to make a dent on the top ten, the other eight games being remnants of big sales from the Golden Week national holiday, held the previous week.

Figures supplied by market research firm Media Create indicate that the total sales for the top 100 games in Japan were just 286,614 – pretty paltry compared to the 445,841 in the same week last year. The company attributes the poor sales to a lack of new releases that week, as well as a generally poor line-up in recent months. However, a number of titles like *Nintendogs* for the DS and *Romancing SaGa: Minstrel Song* did good business during Golden Week. And Japanese gamers should think themselves lucky – at least they don't have poor *Star Wars* games hanging round the top of the charts.

"THIS **RECENT SUCCESS** MUST BE A RELIEF **AFTER THE ¥9.2 BILLION LOSS** OF LAST YEAR"

CAPCOM OVERALL REVENUE (¥ BILLIONS)



ALL LARA'S BASE BELONG TO SCI

THAT'S ONE IN THE EIDOS

It's over at last – Eidos has finally found a buyer. SCi is the proud new owner of the *Hitman* publisher, and the deal seems pretty final. The acquisition bid became unconditional last month, and the entire board at Eidos has resigned and been replaced with SCi's senior executives.

The directors leaving include chairman John van Kuffeler, CEO Mike McGarvey and creative director Ian Livingstone, but SCi has denied the rumour that it intends to remove the bulk of Eidos' senior management team in the future.

"This is an exciting time for everyone connected with SCi and Eidos and we are looking forward to working together to create a major player in the industry," said SCi chief executive Jane Cavanagh.

UK MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

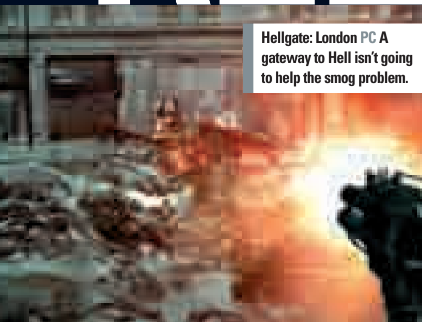
	Title	Publisher	Format
1	**Star Wars Episode III: ROTS**	Activision	Multi
2	**Lego Star Wars**	Eidos	Multi
3	**Championship Manager 5**	Eidos	Multi
4	**Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory**	Ubisoft	Multi
5	**Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition**	Rockstar	Multi
6	**FIFA Street**	EA Sports BIG	Multi
7	**Forza Motorsport**	Microsoft	Xbox
8	**Area 51**	Midway	Multi
9	**Gran Turismo 4**	SCEE	PS2
10	**Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory**	Ubisoft	Multi

We're all for *Star Wars* – the old *Star Wars* at least – but we have to wonder whether it really deserves to be at the top of the chart when the games based on it are, well, rubbish. Really, they are.

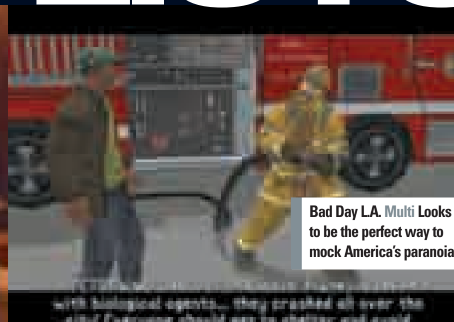
All information is compiled by ChartTrack and is the strict copyright of Elspa (UK) Ltd. UK Entertainment Software Sales Charts (Full Price, All Formats) (w/e 28 May 2005)

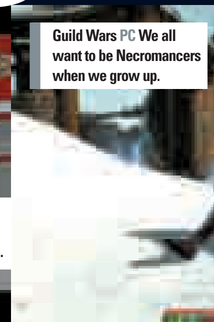


RELEASE LISTS


Hellgate: London PC A gateway to Hell isn't going to help the smog problem.


Star Wars: Episode III Multi Very rubbish, but people will buy it anyway.


Bad Day L.A. Multi Looks to be the perfect way to mock America's paranoia.


Guild Wars PC We all want to be Necromancers when we grow up.

games™ MOST PLAYED

AMPLITUDE

Format: PlayStation
Publisher: Sony

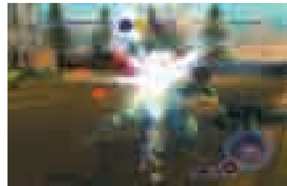
Despite having beaten this game to death years ago, we've recently discovered that the multiplayer games are still worth our attention. With Insane difficulty mode requiring levels of digit dexterity that only the finest gamers possess, it's one hell of a challenge. Our fingers will never be the same again.



DESTROY ALL HUMANS!

Format: Multiformat
Publisher: THQ

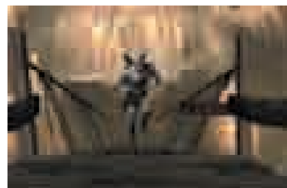
As strange as it may seem, we just can't get enough of destroying our own race – little Crypto just looks so cute as he runs around annihilating mankind. Addictive, challenging and bloody hilarious to boot, we predict that *Destroy All Humans!* will keep us busy for a while.

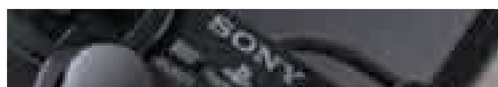


GOD OF WAR

Format: PlayStation2
Publisher: Sony

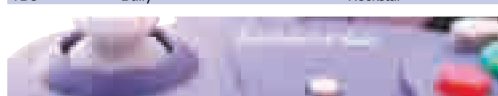
We refuse to give up – it simply won't happen. It's taking a long, long while but we're going to conquer God mode eventually. Such an awesome mix of intricate combos and big, nasty baddies. Surely our skills won't fail us now? No, that's silly talk. We'll finish it tomorrow – maybe.





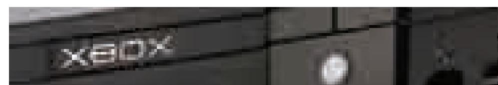
PLAYSTATION2

Month	Title	Publisher	
JUNE '05			
24 June	Destroy All Humans!	THQ	Wanted
24 June	Madagascar	Activision	
24 June	Batman Begins	Electronic Arts	
24 June	Aquanox	JoWooD	
TBC	Delta Force: Black Hawk Down	Novalogic	
TBC	God Of War	Sony	Wanted
JULY '05			
1 July	Bomberman Hardball	Ubisoft	
1 July	Shin Megami Tensei: Lucifer's Call	Ubisoft	
1 July	Saint Seiya, Knights Of The Zodiac: The Sanctuary	Atari	
15 July	Fantastic Four	Activision	
21 July	Brian Lara International Cricket	Codemasters	
July	Charlie And The Chocolate Factory	Take 2	
AUGUST '05			
August	America's Army: Rise Of A Soldier	Ubisoft	
August	Anubis: Curse Of The Pharaoh	Midas	
August	DICE	Bandai	
August	Golden Age Of Racing	Midas	
Q2 '05			
TBC	Dynasty Warriors 5	Koei	
TBC	Far Cry Instincts	Ubisoft	
TBC	The Warriors	Rockstar	
TBC	Ultimate Spider-Man	Activision	
Q3 '05			
TBC	Killer7	Capcom	Wanted
TBC	Resident Evil Outbreak: File #2	Capcom	
TBC	Kingdom Hearts 2	Buena Vista	Wanted
TBC	Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks	Midway	
TBC	Okami	Capcom	Wanted
TBC	Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	Electronic Arts	Wanted
TBC	Sniper Elite	MC2	Wanted
TBC	Worms 4: Mayhem	Codemasters	
TBC	Phantom Kingdom	Koei	
TBC	Shadow Of The Colossus	Sony	Wanted
TBC	LA Rush	Midway	
TBC	Rogue Trooper	SCi	
TBC	Star Wars Battlefront II	LucasArts	Wanted
TBC	The Godfather	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Bully	Rockstar	



GAMECUBE

Month	Title	Publisher	
JUNE '05			
24 June	Batman Begins	Electronic Arts	
24 June	Madagascar	Activision	
27 June	Killer7	Capcom	Wanted
JULY '05			
15 July	Fantastic Four	Activision	
July	Charlie And The Chocolate Factory	Take 2	
AUGUST '05			
29 August	Mario Baseball	Nintendo	
August	The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction	Vivendi	
Q2 '05			
TBC	Odama	Nintendo	
TBC	Ultimate Spider-Man	Activision	
Q3 '05			
TBC	Advance Wars: Under Fire	Nintendo	
TBC	The Movies	Activision	
TBC	Hello Kitty Roller Rescue	Namco	
TBC	187 Ride or Die	Ubisoft	
TBC	Pac-Man World 3	Namco	
Q4 '05			
TBC	The Legend Of Zelda: Twilight Princess	Nintendo	Wanted

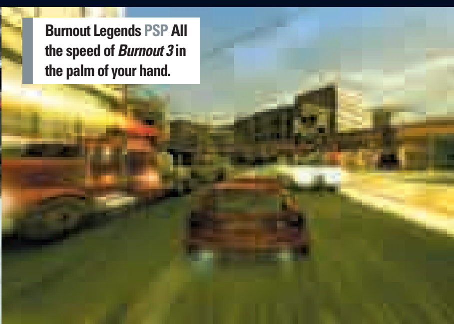


XBOX

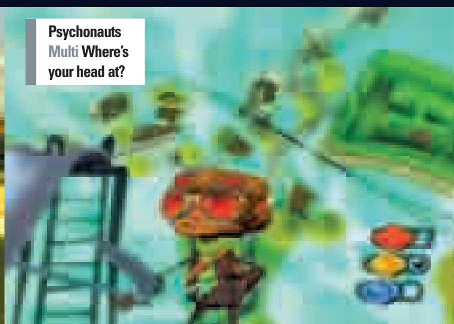
Month	Title	Publisher	
JUNE '05			
24 June	Big Mutha Truckers 2: Truck Me Harder	Empire	
24 June	Destroy All Humans!	THQ	Wanted
24 June	Batman Begins	Electronic Arts	
24 June	Madagascar	Activision	
24 June	Conker: Live And Reloaded	Microsoft	
JULY '05			
15 July	Fantastic Four	Activision	
21 July	Brian Lara International Cricket	Codemasters	
July	Charlie And The Chocolate Factory	Take 2	
AUGUST '05			
August	America's Army: Rise Of A Soldier	Ubisoft	
August	The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction	Vivendi	
Q2 '05			
TBC	Operation Flashpoint	Codemasters	Wanted
TBC	187 Ride Or Die	Ubisoft	
TBC	FarCry Instincts	Ubisoft	
TBC	The Warriors	Rockstar	
TBC	Ultimate Spider-Man	Activision	
Q3 '05			
TBC	Sniper Elite	MC2	Wanted
TBC	Half-Life 2	TBC	
TBC	The Movies	Activision	
TBC	Total Overdose	SCi	
TBC	Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	Electronic Arts	Wanted
TBC	Worms 4: Mayhem	Codemasters	
TBC	Fear And Respect	Midway	
TBC	LA Rush	Midway	
TBC	Timeshift	Atari	Wanted
TBC	Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks	Midway	
TBC	Rogue Trooper	SCi	

CALM YOUR FEVERISH ANTICIPATION WITH OUR COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF FORTHCOMING RELEASES





Burnout Legends PSP All the speed of *Burnout 3* in the palm of your hand.

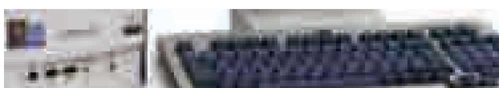


Psychonauts Multi Where's your head at?



Electroplankton DS Chirping things have never been so much fun.

TBC	Star Wars Battlefront II	LucasArts	Wanted
TBC	The Godfather	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Bully	Rockstar	



PC

Month	Title	Publisher	
JUNE '05			
24 June	Madagascar	Activision	
24 June	Batman Begins	Electronic Arts	
24 June	RollerCoaster Tycoon 3: Soaked!	Atari	
JULY '05			
1 July	The Bard's Tale	Ubisoft	
21 July	Brian Lara International Cricket	Codemasters	
15 July	Fantastic Four	Activision	
July	Charlie And The Chocolate Factory	Take 2	
AUGUST '05			
19 August	Neuro Hunter	Deep Silver	
26 August	Earth 2160	Deep Silver	
August	Bet On Soldier	Digital Jesters	Wanted
Q2 '05			
TBC	S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Shadow Of Chernobyl	THQ	Wanted
TBC	Battlefield 2	Electronic Arts	Wanted
TBC	Cold War	DreamCatcher	
TBC	Ultimate Spider-Man	Activision	
Q3 '05			
TBC	Timeshift	Atari	Wanted
TBC	Sniper Elite	MC2	Wanted
TBC	Black & White 2	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Spartan: Total Warrior	Sega	Wanted
TBC	Operation Flashpoint 2	Codemasters	Wanted
TBC	Rise And Fall: Civilizations At War	Midway	
TBC	Starship Troopers	Empire	
TBC	Star Wars Battlefront II	LucasArts	Wanted
TBC	The Godfather	Electronic Arts	

GAME BOY ADVANCE

Month	Title	Publisher	
JUNE '05			
24 June	Madagascar	Activision	
24 June	Fantastic Four	Activision	
24 June	Mario Party Advance	Nintendo	
24 June	Charlie And The Chocolate Factory	Take 2	
24 June	WarioWare: Twisted!	Nintendo	Wanted
AUGUST '05			
29 August	Dynasty Warriors Advance	Nintendo	
Q2 '05			
TBC	Tokyo Xtreme Racer Advance	Crave	
TBC	Ultimate Spider-Man	Activision	
Q3 '05			
TBC	Pokémon Emerald	Nintendo	

PLAYSTATION PORTABLE

Month	Title	Publisher	
Q2 '05			
TBC	WipEout Pure	Sony	Wanted
TBC	Smart Bomb	Eidos	Wanted
TBC	World Tour Soccer	Sony	
TBC	NFL Street 2	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Ridge Racer	Sony	Wanted
TBC	NBA Street	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Ape Escape: On The Loose	Sony	
TBC	Untold Legends: Brotherhood Of The Blade	Sony	
TBC	Dynasty Warriors	Koei	
TBC	Tony Hawk's Underground 2 Remix	Activision	
TBC	Twisted Metal: Head On	Sony	
TBC	FIFA 2005	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Lumines	Ubisoft	
TBC	Metal Gear Ac!d	Konami	
TBC	Need For Speed Underground Rivals	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Tiger Woods 2005	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Black & White Creatures	Majesco	
TBC	Star Wars: Episode III	Ubisoft	
Q3 '05			
TBC	Gran Turismo 4 Mobile	Sony	
TBC	Death Jr.	Konami	
TBC	Infected	TBC	
TBC	Viewtiful Joe VFX Battle	Capcom	
TBC	Burnout Legends	Electronic Arts	Wanted
TBC	World Rally Championship	Sony	
TBC	MediEvil: Resurrection	Sony	
TBC	Star Wars Battlefront II	LucasArts	Wanted
TBC	The Godfather	Electronic Arts	

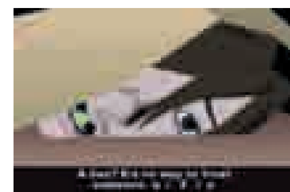
NINTENDO DS

Month	Title	Publisher	
JUNE '05			
27 June	Meteos	Ubisoft	
JULY '05			
1 July	GoldenEye: Rogue Agent	Electronic Arts	
1 July	Bomberman DS	Ubisoft	Wanted
1 July	Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory	Ubisoft	
July	Nanostray	Majestico	
AUGUST '05			
August	Blades Of Thunder 2	Summitsoft	
Q2 '05			
TBC	Black & White Creatures	Majesco	
TBC	Ultimate Spider-Man	Activision	
Q3 '05			
TBC	Advance Wars 3	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Yu-Gi-Oh!: Nightmare Troubadour	Konami	
TBC	Viewtiful Joe Scratch!	Capcom	
TBC	Sonic DS	Sega	
TBC	Super Mario Bros DS	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Vandal Hearts	Konami	Wanted
TBC	Zoo Tycoon	THQ	

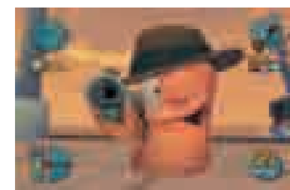
PLEASE NOTE: While every effort has been made to ensure these dates are correct at the time of going to press, they are liable to change at short notice. Which is completely beyond our control, so don't go giving us evils.

gamesTM ON THE HORIZON

KILLER7
Format: Multiformat
Publisher: Capcom
A unique looking game that looks set to receive some very mixed reviews due to its quirky style and gameplay mechanic. Even trying to grasp the plot is a near impossible task – let's just say it involves an ageing hitman with seven personalities. Try it, it's completely mental. Go on – we dare you…



WORMS 4: MAYHEM
Format: Multiformat
Publisher: Codemasters
The little worms will return once again, undoubtedly with a whole host of new/weird/stupid weapons with which to destroy each other. Yes, it's still in 3D and yes, we are aware that the 2D games were far superior. Let's just see what they come up with this time, eh?



VIEWTIFUL JOE VFX BATTLE
Format: GameCube
Publisher: Capcom
Leaving his side-scrolling antics far behind, Joe's now focusing his attention on pummelling individuals. Exactly how well the Viewtiful will will work as a beat-'em-up we don't know, but with the previous *Joe* titles being so superb we're certainly looking forward to finding out.



Every kind of hat suits me **Magical Flying Hat Turbo Adventure – Mega Drive [Sega] 1990** 


1

DEUS EX MEETS **DIABLO** FOR THE **ULTIMATE ONLINE BATTLE** OF **GOOD** VERSUS **EVIL**

HELLGATE: LONDON

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Namco
DEVELOPER: Flagship Studios
RELEASE: 2006
GENRE: First-person RPG
PLAYERS: 1-4 (online)

CONCEPT

In a futuristic London with medieval trappings, stop the Earth being over-run by evil. You can bring a friend…

HISTORY

Flagship hopes to take the FPS/RPG genre beyond its narrative-driven confines with a randomly generated online experience.

These days, there doesn't seem to be much pride attached to press release-related delusions of grandeur. Every game with the slightest sandbox element is a '*GTA*-beater', and every title that enables you to buy your character a new cravat garners a 'revolutionary role-playing game' epithet. So when we heard that Flagship Studios – a team formed by ex-Blizzard employees – is developing a first-person RPG, you could forgive us for not jumping straight out of our chairs.

However, scratch beneath the surface of the press gubbins for *Hellgate: London* and it's clear that the developer's ambitions are not as deluded as we first imagined. "There has never been anything quite like *Hellgate: London*," says Flagship CEO, Bill Roper (who has previously worked on the *Diablo* series as well as *WarCraft* and *StarCraft* titles). "We are creating an action-oriented, fully randomised, dynamically generated RPG with a massive co-operative online component that combines the community and economy elements of an MMORPG with an individualised gaming experience."

Suitably for such a flight of fancy, the story for *Hellgate: London* reads like a mead-fuelled collaboration between Clive Barker and Alan Moore, influenced by sources as diverse as Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange, Dawn Of The Dead, Urotsukidoji* and books such as the *Necronomicon* and *The New Encyclopedia Of Freemasonry*. In 2032, the capital lies in ruins after a sinister gash in the fabric of reality (called The Burn) spews forth hellish Demons. Players must create a character from a series of caste-based options, building up skill sets, magic abilities and randomly generated, upgradeable weaponry in order to take back power and stop The Burn from transforming our world into that of the monsters.

Roper has no trouble explaining why London will be an ideal setting for the title. "It is an amazing city with a fantastic history, all starting from the Druidic ley lines of arcane power on which ancient Londinium was founded, so the idea of melding a near-future setting with archaic abilities and powers was natural," he says. "Over the centuries, London has been ravaged by invasion, plague, fire and wars, being rebuilt over and over again."

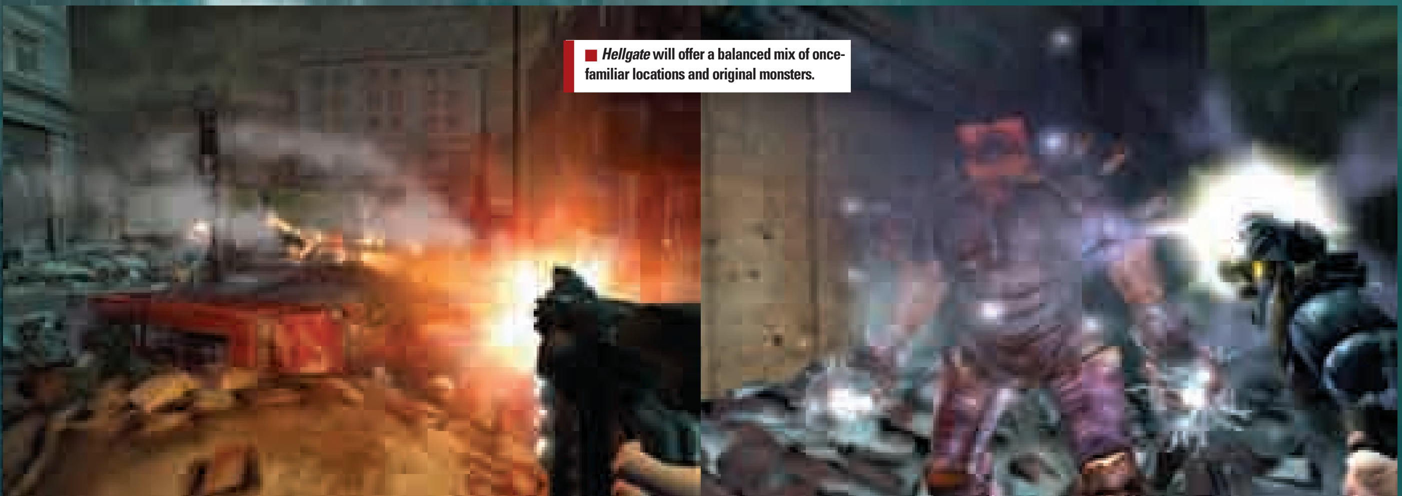
It's ironic, then, that *Hellgate: London* randomly rebuilds itself anew, offering a unique experience for each player. It's a method the team has honed after working on *Diablo*, though it promises it will be developed to a far greater degree for Flagship's first title. "None of us wanted to

HELLGATE: LONDON

PC

"WE'VE ALWAYS FELT THAT RANDOM CONTENT ADDS A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT TO THE RPG EXPERIENCE"

PETER HU, DIRECTOR OF TECHNOLOGY, FLAGSHIP STUDIOS


■ *Hellgate* will offer a balanced mix of once-familiar locations and original monsters.

"THE INDIVIDUAL ONLINE QUESTS HELLGATE: LONDON WILL CREATE PROMISE TO BE ALL THE MORE IMMERSIVE FOR PARTIES DUE TO THEIR UNIQUE NATURE"

just create the same game we've been making in the past," says director of technology Peter Hu. "We were very excited by the opportunity to create something new, both story-wise and gameplay-wise… We've always felt that random content adds a tremendous amount to the RPG experience, not only for the purpose of replayability, but also as a means of individualising the experiences of players. As we've continued to make games with random content, we've homed in on a sort of designed randomness that combines a variety of pre-made and random items and locations."

"There are story points and goals to achieve, but the pathway between these is different for every character," continues Roper. "For example, if everyone reading this started out in New York and made their way to Los Angeles, those parts of their story would be the same. The journey between the two points would be different for each person, with different experiences, routes, risks and rewards."

Of course, this level of randomisation will apply to both the single-player and online versions of the game, and though players can't transfer a single-player hero onto a secure online adventure (an effort art director David Glen suggests should "keep the playing field level"), a quartet of new-world adventurers will be able to battle through the game together online.

However, Roper is quick to point out that *Hellgate: London* should not be bundled with the recent crop of MMORPG development failures. "The term massively multiplayer online role-playing game comes with a lot of baggage, and that is not the style of game we're making," he explains. "We have always focused on making a game that was engaging, absorbing, exciting and fun, and haven't concerned ourselves with genre labels."

"We believe in online communities and the social factors they bring to a game," adds David Glen. "We look to enhance and streamline the accessibility for players to enjoy each other's company online, whether it be small groups or large. There are a lot of features and tools that are necessarily cut from MMORPGs for the sake of creating a contiguous, virtual world. While that creates some fantastic gaming experiences for many players, we

MONSTERS EVERYWHERE

Few of *Hellgate: London*'s assortment of beasts have been unveiled so far, but the developer is keen to emphasise that the demons in the game will be a varied bunch. "Stalkers are small, wiry demons that use their agility to keep out of the reach of characters," says Bill Roper. "This means they hurl balls of fire from a distance, and even climb walls to get away from adventurers. In contrast, Shock Minions are the hulking foot soldiers of the true Demon caste that can fire balls of lightning from metallic claws adhered to their forearms. As opposed to racing about and climbing walls, however, they use lateral movement and co-ordinated crossfire attacks to try and bring a character down." The comparison gives hope that players will be forced to employ varied methods of attack (as opposed to *Doom 3*'s strafe-and-fire kill-all method). "Our philosophy on monster design is that every type of creature you encounter should have one special thing that they do," says Roper, "and that special thing should alter how you play the game in some way."



PUBLISHER PROFILE

■ Though Namco Hometek, the American wing of the legendary Japanese developer, is synonymous with quality gaming, it's released few PC titles. This year, Namco's US output has been retro-heavy, with *Pac-Man World 3* and *Namco Museum 50th Anniversary Arcade Collection* on release schedules for the latter half of 2005.

HISTORY

- **TEKKEN 5** 2005 [PS2]
- **MR DRILLER** 2000 [MULTI]
- **PAC-MAN** 1981 [MULTI]

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

DEMON CITY


DEUS EX

x


DIABLO

+


QUARTET

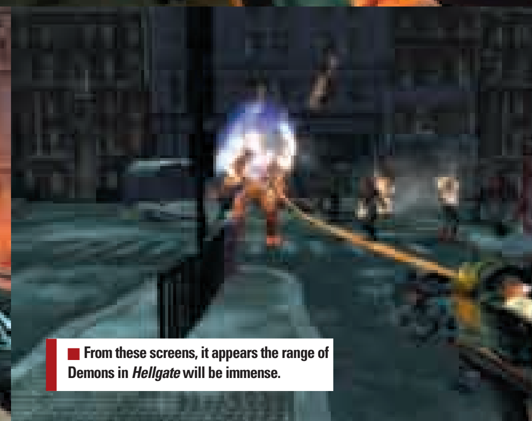
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HELLGATE: LONDON

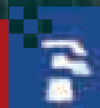
■ Flagship promises an almost infinite number of armament possibilities to play with.







■ From these screens, it appears the range of Demons in *Hellgate* will be immense.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Flagship is comprised of former members of the Blizzard team, who have previously been responsible for the *Diablo* series (including its expansion packs), *WarCraft* and the *StarCraft* franchise. *Hellgate: London* is Flagship's, er, flagship title, and the developer is in no rush to see it flung onto the shelves so it can move onto new projects.

HISTORY

- ■ **WARCRAFT III: REIGN OF CHAOS** 2002 [PC]
- ■ **DIABLO II: LORD OF DESTRUCTION** 2001 [PC]
- ■ **DIABLO II** 2000 [PC]

■ Is that one baddy moving fast, or a large number of bad guys? We've no idea.

"AS DIABLO DEFINED A NEW GENRE WITH THE ACTION-RPG, WE INTEND TO DO AS MUCH WITH HELLGATE: LONDON"

DAVID GLEN, ART DIRECTOR, FLAGSHIP STUDIOS



■ *Hellgate* wears its influences on its sleeve. These corridors look like the Event Horizon.

aim to create a different one." Even so, it's likely that *Hellgate: London* will feature some larger-scale online modes, including player-versus-player deathmatches.

Additionally, the individual online quests promise to be all the more immersive for parties due to their unique nature. "The one thing that really stands out in *Hellgate: London* is that every place you adventure is a localised experience," says Roper. "This means that while common areas like the Underground stations are places where characters interact, buy and sell items, trade amongst themselves, form groups and guilds and basically do all the expected RPG housekeeping tasks, any time they venture out into the world to explore they are thrust into their own unique version of the world."

So should we expect a more immediate online experience from *Hellgate: London* than we've become accustomed to? "Well, it means that players won't have to camp specific monster spawns, they won't have other people stealing their kills, taking their loot, or causing them any assorted other types of unwanted grief," says Roper. "You also won't be tracking down the minion of darkness that killed your family just to wait in line behind four other parties before you can take your revenge."

Even with this level of online ambition and randomised content, there's still a danger that *Hellgate* could descend into a mouse-tapping fragfest, something gamers have become highly wary of after the much-hyped but cerebrally enfeebled *Doom 3* failed to satisfy on so many levels. Thankfully, Flagship is emphasising the balance of using ranged and melee weaponry – which itself is randomly generated and can be customised to an almost limitless degree – with magical abilities rather than merely out-gunning each adversary. In addition, the team is working hard to ensure the wide range of marauding beasties in the game will present enough of a tactical challenge to distance this title from such comparisons.

"We have many, many monsters and a wide variety in their behaviours," says David Glen. "Bosses with minions, packs working as a group, drawing power from corpses nearby… just about anything we can think of to make a creature unique, as long as it's fun to kill." The developer also promises specific Demon battles for team-based online quests, which will provide a greater challenge and force players to co-operate strategically in order to succeed.

The Flagship team is certainly endeavouring to make a big splash with its first-person RPG; as Glen is keen to assert, "we're not so much attempting to perfect an existing style of game, as we are developing a new one." All the same, with such a stellar development pedigree and enormous confidence in its ability to produce the goods, we've no doubt Flagship will be able to meet even the loftiest design objectives. 

"THE FLAGSHIP TEAM IS CERTAINLY ENDEAVOURING TO MAKE A BIG SPLASH WITH ITS FIRST-PERSON RPG"

A DIFFERENT KIND OF MAN

"Characters in *Hellgate: London* are humans struggling to survive in a world over-run by the minions of darkness," explains Bill Roper. "This means you won't be seeing any classic fantasy races or half-breeds, so players can choose between male or female characters in each class and will have control over all of the basics of defining their individual looks." However, the developer has only revealed one type of heroic figure so far – the 21st Century Templar Knight. Peter Hu expands upon this: "Differentiation within a class will be the rule. Two Templars of the same level will most likely look and play almost nothing like each other. Although the core of the class is a melee tank, there are several methods of tanking which may vary from player to player, and a player can even be successful playing the Templar entirely differently." So chances of bumping into a doppelgänger at the online market are slim.



INFINITE AMMO

Confused as to how the concept of randomly generated weaponry would work in a first-person shooter? Bill Roper is on hand to explain everything. "For how the dynamically generated content works in the game, weapons serve as a great example," he says. "We're creating over 100 basic weapon types. These weapons then have randomised variations. On top of this we're introducing a way for players to add a layer of customisation to their items through modifications, or Mods. Almost every type of item in the game has a chance to have a slot on it where a specific type of Mod can fit; some items have just one slot while others can have multiple possible places for Mods. Just as any item in the game, the potential power of Mods increases as the character finds them at higher and higher levels. The structure of modding means that while there are some restrictions on how many and what types can be attached to any item, the variations and level of customisation is nearly limitless." So that's that sorted, then.

BATTLEFIELD 2: MODERN COMBAT





The Sniper can 'paint' enemy vehicles to call in auxiliary firepower.

"WITH THEIR TANKS AND THEIR BOMBS AND THEIR BOMBS AND THEIR GUNS…"

It doesn't take a genius to tell you that the console and PC markets are vastly different. Aside from ports, there are few successful crossover companies – firms like Capcom and Konami enjoy great success on consoles while the PC tends to host specialised developers and publishers. There is the odd exception, however, and as luck would have it, one of those companies is involved in *Modern Combat*. And no, it isn't DICE.

Electronic Arts may be one of the industry's biggest players but that doesn't stop its commitment to supporting every system being less worthy of our respect. And as one of the few firms able to flirt with console and PC gaming, EA knows exactly what needs to change when a PC favourite is reworked for console audiences.

Originally scheduled for release last year, *Modern Combat* has been delayed several times, due largely to the inclusion of a fully fledged single-player campaign. But with the likes of *TimeSplitters* and *Unreal* focusing on multiplayer, is this really necessary? "Perhaps only 8-10 per cent of the people who buy this game are even going to try the multiplayer," explains Marcus Nilsson, executive producer at DICE. "I know how silly that sounds knowing how great the multiplayer game is, but that's the reality we're facing. The numbers from Sony and Microsoft were so inflated when we started development – we thought there was going to be a much wider base for online-only games."

So are we being told that multiplayer-only shooters simply don't work? "On PC, they do. On console… well, they do work on console but console players expect a single-player narrative," says Dan Blackstone, senior producer with EA. "That's why we need to have a kick-ass single-player game. You've got, say, *Medal Of Honor* – huge on PS2 without an online mode. We want to beat that with *Battlefield*'s single-player campaign, and then for the five per cent of people that do have online capability on PS2 this is going to be the must-have title."

While it's strange to think of one of the PC's most popular online FPS franchises being enjoyed in its traditional way by so few people, the single-player game is an attempt to create a similar experience. "We're trying to keep it as close to the multiplayer as we can – it's always got to feel like an army against an army," Blackstone confirms. "Imagine watching a 24-player game – you've got helicopters flying past, tanks going past and battle going off into the distance – you'll get that same feel in single-player as well."

So vehicles, squad mechanics and objectives look set to feel familiar to anyone who's sampled the delights of *Battlefield* before – or even a title that it has inspired. *Star Wars Battlefront* would be the obvious console reference, borrowing fairly heavily from DICE's series.

"It's interesting because the *Battlefield* name doesn't actually have a huge persistence on console – we've never done a console version before," Blackstone tells us. "A lot of teams do a single game then port to multiplayer. We've got two teams: all of the DICE guys here and we've got over 85 people working in the UK doing the single-player campaign. With a dedicated team working on each game mode we're going to deliver an awesome single-player game and an awesome multiplayer game."

So two teams exchanging ideas – surely a great way to keep the familiar feel while distancing solo elements from multiplayer? "I usually like to say that I was the one who educated them in *Battlefield*," claims Nilsson. "But to be perfectly honest, it's been both ways. We had a game that we were really proud of, but sitting down and ▷

"THE TEAM HAS EXCELLED AT RECREATING THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE PC GAMES"

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox, PS2
ORIGIN: Sweden
PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
DEVELOPER: Digital Illusions CE
RELEASE: Q4 '05
GENRE: Shoot-'Em-Up
PLAYERS: 1-4 (2-16 online)

CONCEPT

EA and DICE's war-time collaboration finally makes the much-delayed leap into console territory. Early intelligence suggests very good things indeed for both the online community and the one-man armies out there.

FLYING SOLO

While the *Battlefield* series is best known for its compelling multiplayer experiences, DICE has decided that its first console version should have something extra. To this end, a lengthy single-player campaign is being added, and it promises to be unique. "It's easy to create a linear experience where the player has to use a certain technique to defeat a scenario," Dan Blackstone tells us. "But that's not *Battlefield*." After showing us one of the single-player levels – a frantic attempt to recapture a bridge – he lets us in on a little secret. "What we didn't show is that there's a helicopter near the start. The player can, at any point, run back to it, strafe the bridge and blow all the guys on the bridge up." That would have made life easier…



DEVELOPER PROFILE

Formed in Sweden in 1992 around the development of *Pinball Dreams* (despite having previously worked with the game for some time), DICE has an amazingly varied back catalogue, spanning racing games, FPS games, kids' games and even its early – and still highly acclaimed – pinball efforts.

HISTORY

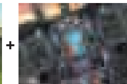
- **BATTLEFIELD 1942** 2002 [PC]
- **MOTORHEAD** 1998 [PSone]
- **PINBALL DREAMS** 1992 [Amiga]

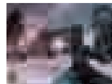
In war, there's loads of fighting over possession of vehicles. Apparently.

Go on – try flying through that little hole in the hangar. We dare you…

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

YOU'RE IN THE ARMY NOW…


BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM
+

MODERN DAY
+

SINGLE PLAYER
=

BATTLEFIELD 2: MC

"IT'S ALL ABOUT GIVING THE PLAYER THE FREEDOM TO PLAY THE GAME AS THEY WANT TO PLAY IT"
DAN BLACKSTONE, SENIOR PRODUCER, EA

BATTLEFIELD 2: MODERN COMBAT [CONT.]

"WE'RE REALLY HEAVILY INVOLVED IN WHAT'S HAPPENING ON THE EA SIDE. WE'RE REALLY PROUD OF OUR FRANCHISE"

MARCUS NILSSON, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, DICE





For a console shooter, the scale of the levels is truly outstanding.

WAR PROFILE

As much as people like getting lost in an original fantasy adventure, recreating familiar and famous battles in digital form has made for some of the most engrossing and popular games of all time. The likes of *Medal Of Honor: Frontline* and *Cannon Fodder* stand as perfect testament to this.

HISTORY

- **CONFLICT: DESERT STORM** 2002 [Multi]
- **NORTH AND SOUTH** 1989 [Amiga]
- **COMBAT** 1978 [Atari 2600]

talking to these guys has helped take things back with us – audio for one thing. Getting Campbell Askew in from working on *Band Of Brothers*, we can do things with sound we didn't know we could."

Askew's influence is evident at this relatively early stage, giving the game a suitably epic feel. "We're bringing that back into multiplayer wherever applicable but we've obviously got more constraints than the single-player side has," says Nilsson. And he's not kidding. With up to 24 soldiers in battles, there's always something going on. But with games like *Black Hawk Down* now supporting over twice that number, couldn't the game have an even greater sense of scale? "We could get more people in there, but we might need to remove half of the world or make the game more infantry-based," Nilsson explains. "That's not what *Battlefield* is." And with the game being balanced around this number of players and still managing a fantastically epic feel, you can't fail to see his point.

The multiplayer modes are already a joy to play. The team has excelled itself in recreating the thrill of the PC games on technically inferior consoles. There are plenty of vehicles to 'borrow' – pinch a civilian car to get to a checkpoint or help yourself to a tank or a helicopter before leaving base camp. The latter are a great example of the game's emphasis on team play; anyone can take one of the birds for a spin, but you need a skilled pilot to take out enemy vehicles or make a troop drop in a crossfire.

With so much freedom, it must have been hard to strike a balance between vehicles, character classes and so on. "Very tricky – you never, ever finish," Nilsson confirms. "After a while when we play in the office, we get really good at playing so we balance it for really good players. Then you get newbies in there and it's totally different. So in a way it's an impossible task, but we'll take it as far as we can."

But despite a relatively small user base for PS2 Online, and Xbox Live already having its favourites, the team is optimistic that *Modern Combat* can make a splash. "For one, it's a kick-ass game and it's really fun to play," says a modest Nilsson. "Secondly, EA will host servers so you know the quality of the servers will be fine." With knowledge of the early days of *Burnout 3* and *TimeSplitters: Future Perfect*, we'll confess to having sniggered at this point, but EA has been pretty quick to address the problems with both games. "Also, the server architecture and cheat protection is going to help this to the top end of multiplayer gaming on both Xbox and PS2. I think many *Halo 2* players will really enjoy this game."

Indeed, *Modern Combat* is as enjoyable and accessible a shooter as we've seen in a long while. Though Nilsson and his team are already in sight of their goal, the single-player element is the one that's up against the clock. "We can work on it together to make the perfect shooter in time for October," he says. "The coming months will be spent on finalising the multiplayer and making sure the single-player experience is on a par with or even exceeds what you'd play with friends."

Good luck, guys – we'd cross our fingers, but that would just make us worse at *Battlefield: Vietnam*…

"BATTLEFIELD 2: MODERN COMBAT IS AS ENJOYABLE AND ACCESSIBLE A SHOOTER AS WE'VE SEEN IN A LONG WHILE"

GROUP THERAPY

Anyone familiar with *Battlefield* will know that it's synonymous with superb squad-based gaming. DICE isn't keen to let this reputation be lost in moving onto consoles so it should come as no surprise that a huge amount of effort is being put into ensuring that multiplayer matches are as balanced and skill-centric as possible. "One of the core values is that it's going to be easy to learn and hard to master," Marcus Nilsson says, going on to address issues that blight other titles. "Sometimes when you're playing against someone far away using peer-to-peer, it can drop to around nine frames per second – you end up trying to cross a square in Russia and you'll be shot without knowing what happened. That's not going to happen here."





Unfortunately, modding options weren't in the build we saw.

SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: LUCIFER'S CALL

IT'S FOR YOO-HOO…

Some of the best things in life require you to wait for them – this is a fact. Cheese matures, fruits ripen and, until you've seen at least 18 birthdays, you'll not be supping any booze down your local (will you?). It's a crying shame. In many cases, though, this waiting game pays off and after nearly eight years we're finally going to have another *Shin Megami Tensei* title to work through.

Lucifer's Call is the third instalment in the *Shin Megami Tensei* series that first appeared on the Super Famicom in the mid-Nineties, and this sequel has certainly been a long time coming. Despite the first two titles never being released in the UK, importers ensured that the games received the acclaim they deserved, and so the third title in the series has been hugely anticipated.

However, as usual, us Europeans have been left waiting again. *Lucifer's Call* (or *Nocturne* as it's called in other regions) has already seen a release in both Japan and the US. In fact, a fourth game is already being promoted in these regions and if Ubisoft hadn't secured a distribution deal with developer Atlus we could well have been left out of the whole thing yet again. Phew.

Unlike its forerunners, *Lucifer's Call* will steer away from the fantasy lands previously used in the franchise, opting instead to bring the fight to our home turf, Earth. Based in a post-apocalyptic Tokyo, you have to face the fact that the entire world's population has nearly been annihilated by a global catastrophe called the Conception – an event that saw demons swarm over the planet and wipe out everyone and everything.

Fortunately, as is so often the case, there is one person who's willing to stand up for mankind's right to exist. Our would-be saviour this time is a youthful lad who happened to be in a 'safe' hospital at the time of the Conception and has become part-demon himself – lucky old him.

During his quest to save what's left of Earth, this young hero will face more than 100 different species of demons, many of which can be recruited into your party if persuaded in the right way – not an easy task as each individual enemy will be susceptible to certain tricks and charms. A fairy, for instance, might be able to seduce some of the weaker-willed monsters out there, but a much firmer hand would have to be taken with more formidable foes – like guest star *Devil May Cry*'s Dante.

Once recruited, these demons can be evolved and levelled up along with your regular party members, but the real choices will come when it's time to merge demons to create stronger, more capable allies. Being forced to choose which characters to blend and which you keep separate is a feature that provides a far greater tactical element than is usually seen in the genre.

With the series having already delivered quality at every other stage, over 50 hours of gameplay that will result in one of many different endings promised, and with Japanese gamers already hailing it as one of the finest RPGs ever made, we suggest you start saving your pennies and clearing a bit of space on your calendar. This is likely to be a biggun.

> "IF UBISOFT HADN'T SECURED A DISTRIBUTION DEAL WITH ATLUS EUROPEAN GAMERS COULD HAVE MISSED OUT AGAIN"

THE DEVIL YOU KNOW

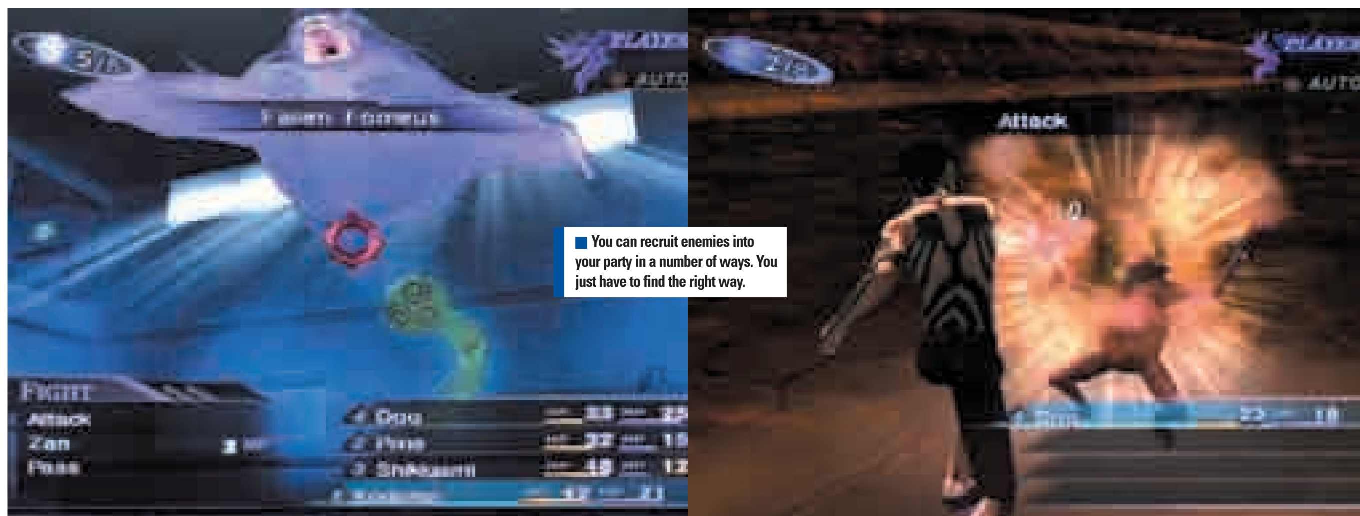
So, our hero will have a few demon powers, eh? Well, another fairly well-known game character with demonic abilities will be making an appearance in *Lucifer's Call*. The super-cool Dante of *Devil May Cry* fame will crop up near the start of the game and – with time – will make a valuable addition to your party should you wish him to join. And let's face it, who wouldn't? A big name like this is certain to boost the popularity of the title when it launches here and might just draw back some of the players who'll snub this third game in the series due to a lack of knowledge of the first two.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
DEVELOPER: Atlus
RELEASE: July '05
GENRE: RPG
PLAYERS: 1

CONCEPT

Use your RPG skills to attempt to take back Earth from the hordes of demons that are destroying it.



You can recruit enemies into your party in a number of ways. You just have to find the right way.

SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: LUCIFER'S CALL
PLAYSTATION2

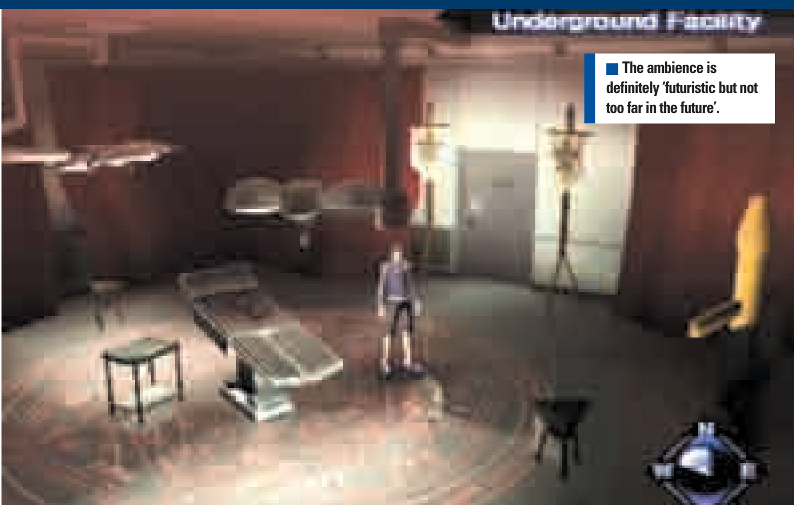


DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ With offices in Japan and the US, Atlus specialises in RPG games and has created some of the finest titles in the genre we've seen to date. The fact that Atlus currently has over 290 staff at its Japanese HQ alone proves the company has come a long way since it opened its doors in 1986.

HISTORY

- **PHANTOM BRAVE** 2004 [PS2]
- **LUFIA: THE RUINS OF LORE** 2003 [GBA]
- **RIVER CITY RANSOM** 1990 [GBA]

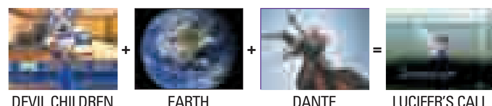


■ The ambience is definitely 'futuristic but not too far in the future'.



VIDEOGAMES MATHS

HELL ON EARTH



DEVIL CHILDREN + EARTH + DANTE = LUCIFER'S CALL

■ With humans being so damn cryptic all the time, it's no wonder they're a dying breed.

"THIS GAME IS A CLEAR DEPARTURE FROM RPG NORMS WITH ITS POST-APOCALYPTIC SETTINGS AND MATURE THEMES"

JOHN PARKES, MARKETING DIRECTOR, UBISOFT

Man

False info is pretty common in the occult industry. If it does turn out to be wrong, just laugh it off, okay?

AMERICAN MCGEE PRESENTS: BAD DAY L.A.







DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox, PC
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Enlight
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: Q1 '06
GENRE: Action/ Adventure
PLAYERS: TBC

CONCEPT

Try to save LA by taking control of a man who really doesn't want to. Interesting idea…

SO CRAZY THAT IT JUST MIGHT WORK

If there was one man we'd expect to be responsible for a game like *Bad Day L.A.* it's American McGee. Fresh from the triumph of the impressive and surprisingly strait-laced *Scrapland*, he's decided to produce a title that takes advantage of America's 'fear culture' by putting a tongue-in-cheek spin on many of the worries that plague the US. It's a bold idea that's guaranteed to offend plenty of po-faced Stateside gamers, but for every American who refuses to take a much-needed break from their own paranoia there should be plenty who not only get, but hugely appreciate, the rather dark joke.

In *Bad Day L.A.*, players are thrust behind the rubbish-filled shopping trolley of a homeless man called Anthony Williams. After losing his cushy job, Anthony was drained of all self-respect and forced into a life of bin searching, begging and isolation – certainly one of the more unlikely videogame heroes we've heard of.

Unfortunately for our poor hero, things become much worse. Everything from earthquakes and storms through to brain-sucking zombies and bomb-toting terrorists decide to have a stab at destroying the city he has come to despise so much, and so – with a horrifyingly painful death being the only other option – he embarks on a cynical mission to rid LA of said problems. Interesting.



The funny thing is he probably doesn't want to extinguish the burning man. Oh, the irony.

This is where much of the title's comedic value and charm is expected to lie. A bitter tramp makes an unlikely and amusing crusader and it looks as if the game's situations, speech and ambience will reflect this nicely – we look forward to hearing the hero bitch about the unfairness of it all as he attempts to hold off a horde of zombies with a chunk of wood.

Aiding the feel of the game will be some aptly quirky visuals that have been provided by LA-based art team Kozyndan, a surreal couple who claim that they are actually "working on a secret formula for controlled nuclear fusion and creating a line of edible chickens". Right… Knowing this may help you understand how they have managed to achieve a unique look that gels with the rest of the package perfectly, and a glimpse at the screenshots will certainly prove that we've got something very interesting to look forward to.

This is all sounding very good to us and a heavy dose of murky satire is exactly what the doctor ordered. Hurrah for American McGee.



"A BITTER TRAMP MAKES AN UNLIKELY AND AMUSING CRUSADER"


eMag

BLACK

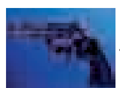




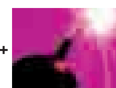
Finger on the trigger? Ready? Then shoot the hell out of everything.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

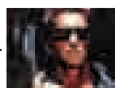
HOW TO MAKE TESTOSTERONE



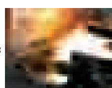
GUNS +



EXPLOSIONS +



ARNIE =



BLACK

Blow up the people. Blow up the vehicles. Blow up the houses. It's all about destruction.

"BY CONCENTRATING ON THE SOLO ADVENTURE, CRITERION HAS BEEN ABLE TO MAKE THE LEVELS MORE IMPRESSIVE"



DEVELOPER PROFILE

Mention the word Criterion and no doubt a big smile will break out across the faces of gamers who have watched the *Burnout* series blossom, from a fun arcade racer the first time around to a high-octane classic with the third instalment.

HISTORY

- **BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN** 2004 [PS2]
- **BURNOUT 2: POINT OF IMPACT** 2002 [PS2]
- **BURNOUT** 2000 [PS2]

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2, Xbox
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: EA
DEVELOPER: Criterion
RELEASE: TBA
GENRE: First-Person Shooter
PLAYERS: 1

CONCEPT

The simplest of premises – simply shoot anything that moves. Blow it up. Blow it up again. An intense and violent adventure.

GUNS, VIOLENCE, DEATH, GUNS, VIOLENCE, DEATH, REPEAT TO FADE…

PS2 **Complexity. Depth. Convoluted storylines. These are the things that fans of the first-person shooter have come to expect in recent years.** Every time another *Medal Of Honor* or *Brothers In Arms* is released, we're told it's the most lifelike adventure yet. This is all well and good, but have we all forgotten why we started playing games in the first place? It wasn't because we wanted to be able to re-create World War II or wallow in the real-life physics of some spacey netherworld. No, it all started with fun. *Pong*? Hitting a ball from A to B. *Space Invaders*? Killing aliens before they kill you. Easy. Simple. Addictive. Plots and ideals that could be summed up on the back of a cigarette packet. Many may have thought those days were gone, but now Criterion has stepped up to the plate to prove that it can still be done. That innocent feeling of playing a game just for the hell of it. Welcome to the world of *Black*.

Black made a brief appearance in 2004 when EA teased us with a first look, but Criterion has obviously got high hopes for the title as it has kept it under wraps since – and with good reason, as this is going to take the FPS and change the rules.

Everything you expect has been blown apart. For a start, *Black* is single-player only. Yes, you heard right. By concentrating on the solo adventure, Criterion has been able to make the levels bigger and more impressive without having to worry about whether it works with four players.

Naturally, a game like this can stand or fall depending upon its weapons and *Black* has a fine array of firearms – everything from the simple pistol to a hulking rocket launcher is here, and forget that 'running out of ammo' business we're now used to, now you can keep your finger on the trigger and watch everything crumble.

Criterion wanted to make it fun just to shoot the hell out of the stages before you've even engaged the enemy. So you can happily fire into the walls and watch as the debris flies and smoke billows out and… hang on a second, we've been playing for hours and we haven't pushed the story along. That's *Black* in a nutshell.

At the pre-E3 event this year where *Black* was again on display, another difference was listening to its British producer telling us the philosophy behind it. While we've grown used to American developers giving us huge spiels about their latest creations, the Criterion guys were merely telling us about their love of Eighties action movies and how *Black* used the same philosophy – it's dumb, loud and there are explosions, guns, death and as much destruction as the PS2 can handle. In fact, with the PS3 now a reality, it's looking likely that *Black* will push the current technology to the limit, and if this is how this wave of consoles are retiring, then to paraphrase Jon Bon Jovi (which is only apt with a game so ensconced in the Eighties ethos) then the PS2 is definitely going out in a blaze of glory. Now we'll just kick back with the *Rambo* trilogy and the director's cut of *Commando* and wait to get the final code of *Black* in our sweaty little palms.



"YOU CAN HAPPILY FIRE INTO THE WALLS AND WATCH AS THE DEBRIS FLIES AND SMOKE BILLOWS OUT"

THE CRITERION PHILOSOPHY

Before Criterion threw its hat into the ring a few years ago, many thought that there was little else that could be done in the racing genre. What Criterion did was strip it down to basics, throwing out the realism and authenticity of *Gran Turismo* and replacing it with the sort of vehicular destruction that would give JG Ballard nightmares. Suddenly we didn't have to worry about how much fuel was in the tank or whether we needed to slow down to take the next bend – it was all about the speed, the thrills and the intensity of it all. Apply this logic to the first-person shooter genre and voila – *Black*!





Black has little respect for the beauty of architecture – it's all just there to be blown to smithereens.

WE ❤ KATAMARI

"IF YOU WANT TO CALL ME BABY, JUST GO AHEAD NOW"

If you try to explain the concept of *Katamari Damacy* to someone, they tend to just stare at you as though you're lecturing them on the benefits of chewing off their own limbs. But within seconds of rolling a ball of stuff into erasers, cards, mice, shoes, tables and buildings as it grows in size, we've yet to see a single person so heartless as to not crack a smile. It's just one of those games. If only there was a sequel to further entertai… hang on. Excellent. Thanks, Namco.

In one of the best stories for a sequel ever, it would appear that the King Of All Cosmos has made a name for himself after his son's efforts in the first game. With his widespread popularity comes a collective cry for the skies to be filled with more Katamaris (the globes of stuff collected by the Prince, for those not in the know). Suffice to say the King has far too much on his plate, what with ruling over the entire cosmos, so the task of rolling up clumps falls to the Prince and his cousins. As concepts go, they don't come much simpler than pushing a sticky ball around and gathering pretty much everything you see, but through a combination of charm, originality and fun, Namco wins the day.

> "AS CONCEPTS GO, THEY DON'T COME MUCH SIMPLER THAN PUSHING AROUND A STICKY BALL, GATHERING EVERYTHING YOU SEE"

As before, it's analogue sticks all the way. The tank controls take a little getting used to for new players but once they're mastered it's a brilliantly involving control mechanic – the sense of inertia will have you pulling back on the sticks like a maniac trying to bring the clump to a halt and desperately flailing to level it out when you pick up something that unbalances the big ball o' things. And if you could never get to grips with the controls before, imagine how tough it would be if you were arguing with another player over whose left they mean…

Most people who played the original game probably won't have put much time into the multiplayer side of things, but an extra mode for the sequel will hopefully change this. Rather than pitting two Princes against each other (although versus play is still here), Co-op mode is more old-school; with one side of the clump each, there's a lot of shouting at one another in true 'to me, to you' fashion to direct the Katamari as best you can. This is a frantic flashback to the base thrills of co-operation, closer to the likes of riding a pedalo than any recent games, albeit without the physical exertion. Which, we're sure you'll agree, is a good thing.

Other than that, it's the return of the familiar. Everything will be bigger, better and more refined as the Prince collects thousands of things that don't belong to him and has them fired into space. While we've only had a brief chance to roll up more junk, *We ❤ Katamari* is precisely what fans of the first game will want – a chunkier slice of simple, stylish gaming that still surpasses most every other current title in terms of sheer fun. By throwing in a little more variety (the more puzzle-based levels of the first game will be joined by tasks like building snowmen), the plan is to give the rolling action much more longevity.

All good news, sure, but we've heard more than we needed to. Namco had us with the promise of an all-new soundtrack. All together now, "Baaaaaaaaah bah bah bah bah baah baaah baaah bah baaah baaah bah bah baaaaaaaah…"



DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: TBC
DEVELOPER: Namco
RELEASE: Q3 '05
GENRE: Puzzle
PLAYERS: 1-2

CONCEPT

A hearty welcome to the King Of All Cosmos and his hard-working Princes on their return to the rolling hills to collect more things. The Earth really is full of things…

GROWTH ACCEPTED

The most entertaining thing about *Katamari Damacy* and its aptly titled sequel is the world's growth as the game progresses. While the first few levels sell the games short (rolling up small amounts of tiny things in, say, a classroom), cracking on through the game allows you to head outside, roll up benches, plants and even the populous before heading back to your starting location and adding the entire building to your clump. Then roll up the odd mountain, perhaps a few clouds and maybe – if you're really lucky – a sea monster or two. So… many… things…





Start small with a ball of household items, as one day a ball of mansions will be yours.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

While Namco has key franchises like *Tekken* to keep its profile high, its commitment to churning out original IPs can only be commended. Even if some (*Breakout*, take a bow) aren't that good. Still, the title for this *Katamari Damacy* sequel couldn't be more perfect…

HISTORY

- **DEATH BY DEGREES** 2005 [PS2]
- **SOUL BLADE** 1997 [PSone]
- **PAC-MAN** 1980 [Arcade]



You can roll competitively (like this) or co-operatively (on the right). Either way, it's more fun than you can imagine.



VIDEOGAMES MATHS

"WE'LL ROLL ON WITH OUR HEADS HELD HIGH"


KATAMARI DAMACY

+


MORE PRINCES

x


AWESOME

=


WE ❤ KATAMARI

You can be the world's oddest tourist and collect landmarks, houses, buses…

500m

"THE QUIRKY GAMEPLAY THAT CAPTIVATED THE GAMING WORLD RETURNS AS YOU CONTINUE TO ROLL UP ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING"
NAMCO PRESS RELEASE

STUBBS THE ZOMBIE: REBEL WITHOUT A PULSE

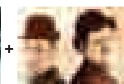
"NOTHING HAS THE SMELL OF SUCCESS LIKE ROTTING FLESH; WE'RE REALLY ENJOYING BRINGING THIS CONCEPT TO LIFE, OR UN-DEATH, AS THE CASE MAY BE"
ALEXANDER SEROPIAN, PRESIDENT, WIDELOAD GAMES

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

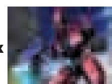
"BRING OUT YOUR DEAD!"


DAWN OF THE DEAD

+


LAUREL AND HARDY

x


THE HALO ENGINE

=


STUBBS THE ZOMBIE


Stun a foe with lethal flatulence, then beat him to death with his own arm. Nice.


Stubbs has a few context-sensitive 'instant death' attacks like this.

STUBBS THE ZOMBIE: REBEL WITHOUT A PULSE

XBOX/MULTIFORMAT

DEVELOPER PROFILE

Founded in 2003 by Bungie veteran Alexander Seropian, based in Chicago and made up of a core team of people with plenty of industry experience (including several other ex-Bungie types), Wideload Games' mantra is that it was set up 'to make unusual games for unusual people'. Going on its first title, it seems to be living up to that ideal.

HISTORY

STUBBS THE ZOMBIE IS THE FIRST TITLE FROM WIDELOAD GAMES





Vehicles provide transport and help you get rid of the more annoying elements of society.

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox, PC, Mac
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Aspyr Media
DEVELOPER: Wideload Games
RELEASE: Sept '05
GENRE: Action/Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

CONCEPT

Described by its creators as a third-person chew-'em-up, *Stubbs The Zombie* mixes mindless violence with plenty of comedy and a side order of strategy.

FORGET THE MEEK – IT'S THE DEAD THAT'LL INHERIT THE EARTH

It's a shame that all the anticipation for Wideload Games' first project isn't due to *Stubbs The Zombie* being a good idea, but because it's 'that game that uses the *Halo* engine'. That's a pretty poor reason to get excited – not only is *Stubbs* a third-person melee-based game as opposed to an FPS, but the range of improvements made to the engine by Wideload put it as far away from Master Chief's debut as you could possibly get.

Stubbs The Zombie is an interesting take on the third-person action genre packed with slapstick comedy and gore, and you play Stubbs. Previously Edward Stubblefield, a down-on-his-luck salesman who was murdered in the Thirties, you've returned from the dead 20 years after Punchbowl, a 'city of the future', has been built over your grave. Exactly why Stubbs has risen hasn't been revealed (it's integral to the plot, apparently) but it gives you free rein to create your own zombie horde.

In order to do that you'll need to chow down on the locals and, thankfully, there are plenty of them. Simply killing an opponent with your bare hands (or using an up-close special attack to eat their brains) is enough to bring them back as a zombie, after which they'll join your ranks. Any zombies in the immediate vicinity can be called with a single button press and you can then send them lumbering towards any enemies nearby. While they can be left to their own devices, it's important to use your zombies to your advantage – approaching a machine-gun nest, for instance, without your 'human' shields isn't advisable when you're already falling apart.

However, basic melee attacks and a variety of useable vehicles aren't the only weapons in Stubbs' arsenal. Taking out a cluster of enemies is easy with a Gut Grenade – a chunk of Stubbs' internal organs that explodes on contact and turns nearby opponents into zombies. Some harder-to-reach enemies require you to detach Stubbs' hand and send it scurrying off, latching onto the heads of victims before 'possessing' them and giving you control of their movements (useful if they have a firearm).

You can also use the Flatulence Bomb to stun everyone around you with foul-smelling gas, after which you can beat them to death with their own limbs. But this isn't always advisable considering how the way you kill an enemy affects their return from the dead – headless zombies can't eat brains, armless ones have no melee attacks and so on. It's a minor touch, but one that adds some strategy to the decidedly action-based proceedings.

True, there are other zombie-based titles arriving this year that could cause this to get lost in the shuffle, but *Stubbs The Zombie* has more than enough innovation to stand out from the shambling horde. Its tongue-in-cheek humour and stylised atmosphere are a nice counterpoint to other gore-laden exploits, but it's challenging and fun too. There is life after *Halo* after all…

"STUBBS LOOKS TO DO FOR THE ZOMBIE-FLICK GENRE WHAT DESTROY ALL HUMANS! DOES FOR SCI-FI B-MOVIES"

GOLDEN OLDIES

***Stubbs*' soundtrack is thoroughly in keeping with the game's retro setting. However, whereas most publishers would have plumped for a selection of licensed original Fifties tunes, Aspyr – with its background primarily in music distribution – has gone one better and recorded 'reinterpretations' of classic tunes such as *Mr Sandman*, *Lollipop* and *Strangers In The Night* with current indie bands and upcoming artists instead. Despite sounding like a recipe for disaster, the results actually work incredibly well and although the songs help create a Fifties feel that resonates with the rest of the game, the new versions never sound old-fashioned or out of place. The Flaming Lips singing *If I Only Had A Brain* from *The Wizard Of Oz*? Don't knock it until you've heard it.**

GEARS OF WAR





Thanks to being dubbed 'the new *Halo*', *Gears Of War* faces an uphill struggle.

OH DANNY BOY, THE GEARS, THE GEARS ARE CALLING…

Would anyone have predicted before the launch of the Xbox that *Halo* would be such a massive hit? We're not saying it's a bad thing, more a lucky turn of events. However, it seems that rather than hedging its bets this time and expressing confidence in the entire Xbox 360 launch line-up, Microsoft has already decided that this is set to be 'the next *Halo*'. But does that mean the bar set for *Gears Of War* is already too high?

Those who met Epic Games behind closed doors at E3 don't think so, as the game left LA with the 'Xbox 360 Game Of Show' award. This may have something to do with the undoubted 'wow' factor that *Gears Of War* has – believe it or not, it really does look as crisp in-game as these shots suggest. The huge amount of detail, texturing and lighting, not to mention the wide variety of explosion, flame and flare effects, really have to be seen in motion to appreciate what the new console is doing, especially since what we saw was running on Alpha kits exhibiting, according to Microsoft, 30 per cent of what the machine will do. Incredible isn't the word.

On both the story and gameplay front, however, things are more conventional; the 'gears' of the title refer to the men and women making up the armies of the Coalition of Ordered Government (or COG… yes, we see what you did there, Epic) sent out to destroy the invading Locust Horde, a vicious group of creatures intent on wiping out humanity on an Earth-like planet. So, not at all like *Halo* then.

What's more, *Gears Of War*'s action uses concepts that we've seen elsewhere: simple squad-based mechanics that see your men obey orders on command (*Rainbow Six*), selectively destructible environments (*Pariah*) and an insistence on taking cover to avoid attack (*kill.switch*).

Playing predominantly from a third-person perspective but retaining the feel of an FPS, the game gives you several choices on how to attack the enemy, from storming in waving your guns around and peering out from behind obstacles, to sticking your gun around corners or over walls and firing blind thanks to the removal of the crosshair and a change of camera angle. The addition of interactive objects makes for a nice touch – such as a flaming car than must be pushed along to ward off flying enemies that hate bright light, statues that can be demolished on top of entrenched opponents and so on – although whether these minor elements will make much of a difference on a grander scale is another matter.

Undeniably, though, much of the battle for Epic appears to have already been won – those privy to the E3 demo are already raving about the game as though it's the second coming, despite the underlying game mechanics not being exactly revolutionary. Maybe it's a British thing, but we find ourselves being slightly more cynical; it certainly looks great, but a few concerns (such as a lack of strategy and the scripted way that only some parts of the environment respond to your gunfire) keep our enthusiasm needle from pushing past 'quite excited' just yet.

If such issues are addressed, this could well be the game the Xbox 360 needs at launch; if not, well, it'll most likely still do very well. After all, it's all about the graphics, isn't it? Isn't it?



"GEARS OF WAR LOOKS LOVELY, BUT WE'RE HOPING THE ACTION CAN MATCH THE GAME'S VISUAL PROWESS"

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox 360
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Microsoft
DEVELOPER: Epic Games
RELEASE: Nov '05
GENRE: Action Shooter
PLAYERS: 1 (Multiplayer TBA)

CONCEPT

Epic tries to do for the 360 what Bungie did for the Xbox, creating a unique blend of frantic blasting action for the console's launch.

THE MORE, THE MELEE-R

With taking cover being an important part of *Gears Of War*, it's obvious that much of the combat consists of long-distance firefights that rage on until someone dies. However, there are times when only a swift fist to the face will do and, thankfully, Epic has already made preparations for any melee-based opportunities you'll get. But it's not just about hitting buttons to club the opposition to death – instead, the game triggers a mini-game of sorts (the style of which Epic has yet to make clear) that, if won, will see you finish off the enemy in style. It sounds feasible although how well it'll work in the heat of battle remains to be seen…

GEARS OF WAR
XBOX 360



DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Epic Games has gone far since its conception in 1991. Originally named Epic MegaGames, the company's big break didn't come until the release of *Unreal* some seven years later. Since then, it's gone on to become a leading creator of graphic engines, as well as the driving force behind a number of FPS titles.

HISTORY

- **UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP** 2002 [Xbox]
- **UNREAL TOURNAMENT** 2000 [Multi]
- **UNREAL** 1998 [PC]



■ Sadly, the characters are a little generic, much like bits of the gameplay.

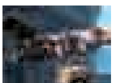


■ It might be hard to believe, but the game really does look this good.

"IN GEARS OF WAR THE BATTLEFIELD IS A LETHAL PLACE – TO FOOLISHLY STAND OUT IN THE OPEN IS TO DIE"
MICROSOFT PRESS RELEASE

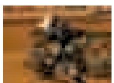
VIDEOGAMES MATHS

JUST A TINY COG IN THE WAR MACHINE



UNREAL TOURNAMENT

+



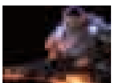
KILL.SWITCH

x



OOH, PRETTY

=



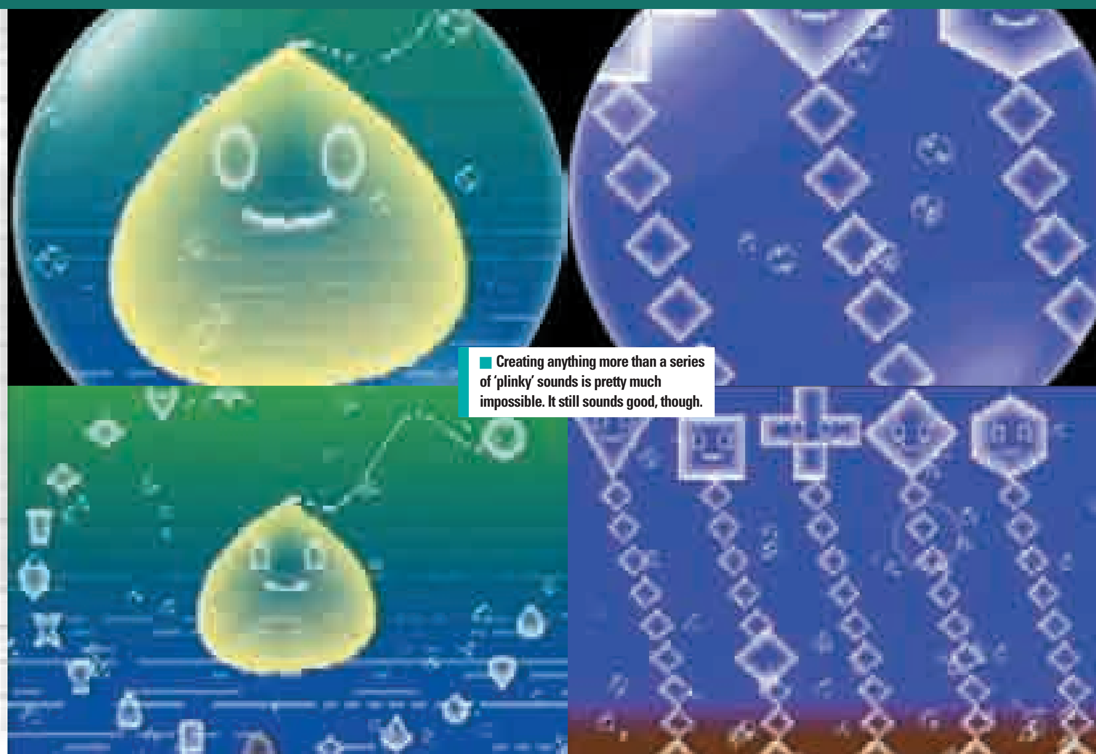
GEARS OF WAR

ELECTROPLANKTON

NOT TOO SHABBY FOR A NON-GAME

The combination of music and videogames is a wonderful thing. In fact, some of our favourite titles have been the result of the two coming together. When it comes to the DS, we feel that *Band Brothers* is still one of the finest titles that the machine has to offer; so knowing that the handheld is so well-suited to tune-based titles, we were pleased to hear that *Electroplankton* would be a music game – but we soon found that this isn't quite the kind of title to which the genre lends itself.

Electroplankton is currently being described as 'Touchable Media Art' – a label that's more likely to baffle rather than aid the gaming public in understanding what they're to be faced with. But this confusing moniker doesn't seem quite as ridiculous when you consider that the game's been produced by Japanese contemporary musician Toshio Iwai – the designer of *SimTunes* among other things – and takes the form of a collection of little animals that make different noises when you jab them with a stylus.



Creating anything more than a series of 'plinky' sounds is pretty much impossible. It still sounds good, though.

"THE APPEAL OF SUCH AN AIMLESS AND SIMPLE TITLE COULD WEAR THIN FAR TOO QUICKLY"

That's about it really. There will be ten types of plankton available, each with their own way of making soothing noises. Some can record sound samples while others mimic fluted wine glasses and howl tunefully at you when rubbed. It's very… interesting.

As well as the main 'game' there will also be an Audience mode that allows users to kick back and enjoy the dulcet tones that the Electroplankton are capable of producing when put in the hands of someone at Nintendo HQ who knows what they're doing. Although you'll be able to interfere with the Plankton while in this mode, it looks like it will serve better as a tutorial to show you exactly how much you can get out of the little fellas should you put in the time to learn each one's special talents.

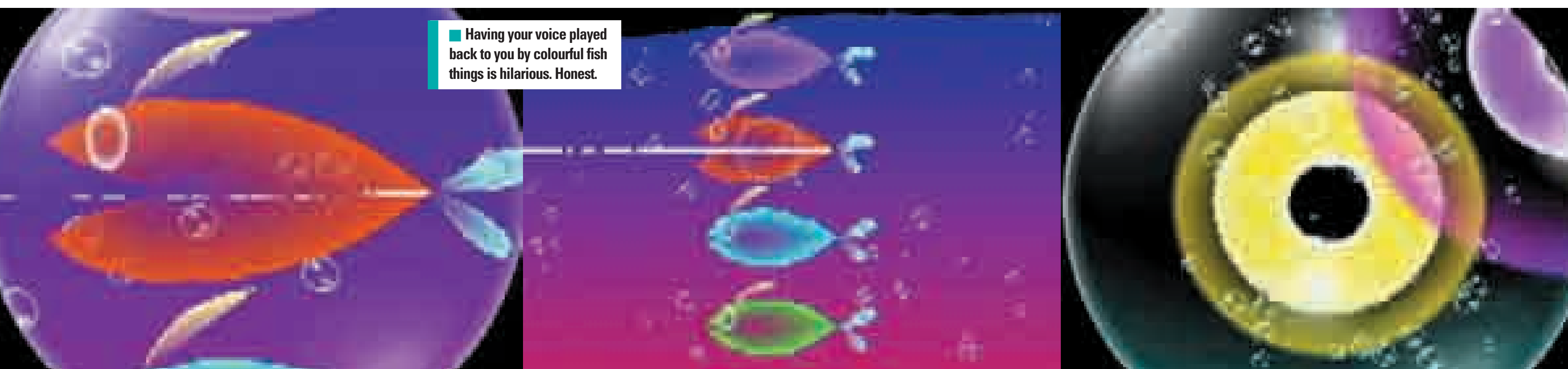
Electroplankton is looking like a very enjoyable title and is perfect fodder for the DS's stylus-based capabilities, but exactly how long you'll keep returning to make little smiley creatures perform chiming noises is questionable and we feel that the appeal of such an aimless and simple title could wear thin far too quickly. Still, this is a game you're just going to have to play to fully understand.

DETAILS

FORMAT: Nintendo DS
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Nintendo
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: TBC (Japan: Out Now)
GENRE: Music
PLAYERS: 1

CONCEPT

Create weird and wonderful music with electronic pond life.



Having your voice played back to you by colourful fish things is hilarious. Honest.


eMag

CIVILIZATION IV

"WE STILL COVER THE USUAL TIME PERIOD OF 4000 BC TO 2050 AD BUT IT'S HOW WE MAKE THE JOURNEY THAT WILL SET THIS GAME APART"
BARRY CAUDILL, SENIOR PRODUCER, FIRAXIS

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

INGREDIENTS FOR A CIVILISED SOCIETY



CULTURE + RELIGION x 3D = CIVILIZATION IV

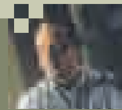


One day, all this will be gleaming metal and concrete. If you like. Or fields. Your choice.



Exploration is still a big part of the gameplay, so you can conquer the seven seas pirate style, if you so desire.

CIVILIZATION IV
PC



DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Firaxis has long been the home of legendary Sid Meier, a developer birthed in the days of lone programmers. One such example of Firaxis and Meier collaborating is *Sid Meier's Pirates!*, the recent spiritual update to Meier's original *Pirates!* from the mid Eighties.

HISTORY

■ **SID MEIER'S PIRATES!** 2004 [PC]
■ **CIVILIZATION III** 2001 [PC]
■ **SID MEIER'S GETTYSBURG!** 1997 [PC]

AND ON THE SEVENTH DAY, GOD FORGOT TO CREATE CIVILISED SOCIETY

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Take 2
DEVELOPER: Firaxis
RELEASE: Q4 '05 (US: Nov '05)
GENRE: Strategy
PLAYERS: 1-TBA

CONCEPT

■ The latest instalment in the series that lets you build your own society while conquering those around you.

While these shots of *Civilization IV* don't show a dramatic revolution for the series, the franchise is undergoing a quiet evolution. Long-term fans won't go tripping over any unexpected kinks in the gameplay as the central idea remains the same – explore the world, discover cities, contend with rival civilisations. What Firaxis is doing is pushing the boundaries of various playing styles.

While you still have to pick your civilisation, you now get the choice of two leaders within each society. Pick the French, for example, and you can side with the aggression and improved army units of Napoleon or the free culture upgrades of Louis XIV. This could double the room allowed for various playing styles, and the introduction of religion adds another factor for *Civilization* experts to consider.

Each religion has its advantages and gives you the option to recruit missionaries to convert others to your beliefs. Seeding your religion in other nations increases your chances of getting along with them and there are further gains to consider; if your religion is Daoism and you capture the Daoist holy city, it will give you lines of sight for every Daoist area in the world.

This religion template will essentially replace the role of governments, which will abandon the black and white 'democracy or communism?'-style choices offered by *Civilization III*. Instead, you have choices that influence the government's stance and your society rather than making a direct decision yourself. Will you outlaw slavery? Is freedom of speech allowed? Making decisions on emancipation, free speech and other political areas will see you form a dictatorship or liberal utopia, with other societies reacting accordingly.

There are also minor changes that change the complexion of the game. For example, with the Tech tree, rather than having to research the same technology as other players you can take different routes or skip entire branches. This means it's one large Tech tree taking in the major events in history rather than being broken up over different eras, and this opens up more possibilities. People units will also feature, so if you secure the services of a famed real-world figure, you can reap the rewards. Five categories will allow you to build cities designed for a specific purpose. Create a city geared towards science and you could find Isaac Newton among your ranks; snag a famed engineer and you can build a wonder much faster than before.

Another change is that combat has been revamped with units now represented by numbers rather than a health bar. Units gain experience and level up in typical RPG fashion and you can assign stat points to combat ability, new units and so on.

Finally, the most obvious difference is in the graphics, which have been given a facelift. It's the same engine that hosted *Sid Meier's Pirates!* so there's plenty of detail when you zoom in, which is symbolic of *Civilisation IV* – on the face of it, it doesn't look like a huge step forward, but look closely and there's a lot more happening than you'd expect…



"WHAT FIRAXIS IS DOING IS TRYING TO PUSH THE BOUNDARIES OF VARIOUS PLAYING STYLES"

MULTIPLICITY

***Civilization* has never been known as a hotbed of great multiplayer gaming, and it's something Firaxis is trying to redress. Multiplayer has been a priority since development started, Firaxis says, and the time invested in this mode has revealed that it only really comes to life in co-operative play. So there's the option to have one team-mate or a few join you against a rival team – this way not only is everything shared between the players but there's an incentive for team-mates to bail you out of trouble should the going get tough at your end. It'll be interesting to see how the balance works but with traditional online, hot-seat multiplayer and email multiplayer bases covered, Firaxis is leaving nothing to chance.**



■ The armies look tiny when zoomed out. Look at their little legs! Look at their little faces! And so on.



DEAD RISING

WHEN THERE'S NO MORE ROOM IN HELL…

So survival horror arrives on next-gen consoles and moves from the haunted house of old into the shopping malls of tomorrow. As you've probably guessed from the screenshots, *Dead Rising* is the *Dawn Of The Dead* game in all but name and official licence fees. George A Romero might not be involved, but *Dead Rising*'s mall certainly echoes the setting of his acclaimed 1978 zombie flick. The story is also as unashamedly hackneyed as the finer examples of the genre – Frank West is a freelance photographer who finds a mall has been over-run by zombies, and so begins his fight for survival.

Meanwhile, the zombies are of the 2004 *Dawn Of The Dead* remake – numerous, strong and fast if you run into a group of them at night. While West builds makeshift weapons from the resources around him, time marches on until the sun sets and the zombies become faster and more powerful. The official term for this is "a real-time system where time is dynamic" but it's a wordy way of saying that no matter what Frank is doing, time will keep ticking away. Purists may complain that the time of day shouldn't affect zombies – they're not vampires, after all – but with other strategic elements thin on the ground, it adds a little forethought to proceedings.

The strongest image so far is that of West standing on top of a van with thousands of zombies around him; it brings to mind the finale of the recent *…Dead* film, when Ving Rhames and co bust through the undead horde with a truck. Impressive in CGI, even more impressive on console? It's one set-piece that will allow Capcom an opportunity to flex Xbox 360's muscles and squash as many zombies as possible, and it already looks a world away from the fog that has plagued the PS2's *Dynasty Warriors* series.

The trade-off is that the graphics don't seem a huge push onwards from what the Xbox offered, as Capcom's artists have no doubt had to be disciplined with textures and suchlike to keep the zombie count high. The illusion of horror is also broken by the multiple appearance of a few identical zombies. However, the sheer number of the undead onscreen should be an early indicator of Xbox 360's power.

> "DEAD RISING IS THE DAWN OF THE DEAD GAME IN ALL BUT NAME AND OFFICIAL LICENCE FEES"

This preview comes very early in *Dead Rising*'s life and, as such, many details are still unknown. For example, Capcom says there'll be other survivors who give you clues. Does this mean they'll join you or remain detached NPCs who only offer items and a few lines of dialogue? Likewise, there's no say on whether the game will offer the 'life in the mall' aspect that the *Dawn Of The Dead* films played upon. Frank is seen battling zombies in a grocery store but does he need to grab food to boost his health?

Dead Rising doesn't look to be as subtle as that, instead offering *State Of Emergency*-style chaos in a tighter environment with zombies. That's enough to turn most heads though we'll have to wait until 2006 before we know whether it works.

THE MISFITS

One concern with *Dead Rising* is that the main character, Frank West, appears to be the generic gruff male lead that so many videogames turn to. Without the confirmation of multiple characters working alongside Frank to ensure their survival, it leaves *Dead Rising* clinging to its lead character more than it should. After all, both *Dawn Of The Dead* films had a multitude of strong characters to draw upon, with Flyboy, Francine, Ken and CJ both such strong 'support' characters that they essentially diluted the spotlight on any central hero. West could yet turn out to be an interesting lead who doesn't need any help from others, but with his leather jacket, attitude and pained grimace, it looks unlikely.

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox 360
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Capcom
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: TBA '06
GENRE: Action adventure
PLAYERS: 1

CONCEPT

Frank West finds himself in a shopping mall over-run by zombies and has to fight for his survival. No niceties here, just baseball bats and chainsaws.



The game's stand-out image, marred only by multiple blond cops and yellow shirts.





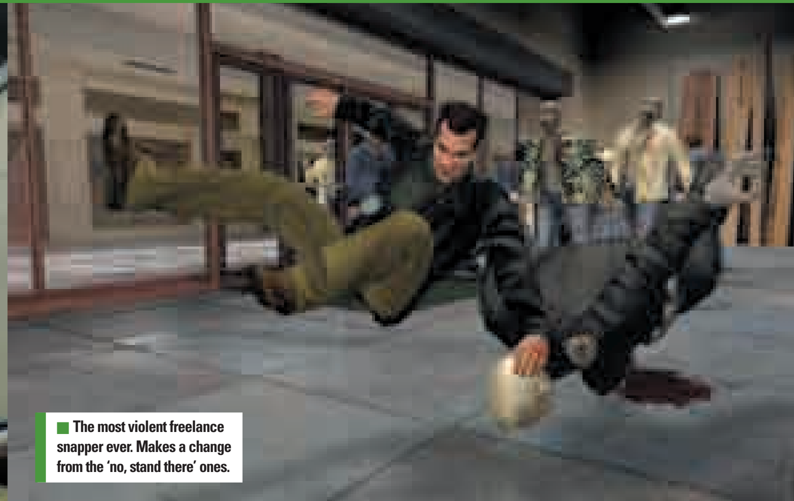
DEVELOPER PROFILE

Capcom has established itself as the master of survival horror. With the exception of the *Project Zero* and *Silent Hill* series, it practically holds the monopoly on the genre thanks to *Resident Evil, Haunting Ground* and *Dino Crisis.*

HISTORY

- **HAUNTING GROUND** 2005 [PS2]
- **RESIDENT EVIL 4** 2005 [Cube]
- **DINO CRISIS 3** 2003 [Xbox]





The most violent freelance snapper ever. Makes a change from the 'no, stand there' ones.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

...THE DEAD WILL WALK THE EARTH

DAWN OF THE DEAD (1978) + DAWN OF THE DEAD (2004) x XBOX 360 = DEAD RISING

Look closely for neat touches, like the way zombies are packing out the distance…

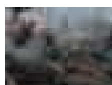
"WE [ARE] CREATING THE PERFECT BLEND OF UNIQUE GAMING EXPERIENCES AND REVOLUTIONARY, CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY"

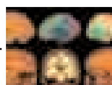
KENZO TSUJIMOTO, CEO, CAPCOM

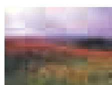
CALL OF DUTY 2

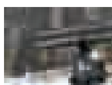
VIDEOGAMES MATHS

CALL OF DUTY 2


CALL OF DUTY

+

SMARTER

+

BIGGER SCOPE

=

CALL OF DUTY 2

"OUR TEAM AT INFINITY WARD IS COMMITTED TO THRUSTING GAMERS INTO THE HEAT OF BATTLE LIKE NO OTHER"
GRANT COLLIER, PRESIDENT, INFINITY WARD

The idea here isn't how nice things look; it's how you feel. Pretty damn panicky, actually…

North Africa – more specifically, Toujaned. A great place to demonstrate new particle effects.

DEVELOPER PROFILE

Part of the *Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault* team broke ranks and went off to form the troupe behind the first *Call Of Duty*. This is *Call Of Duty 2*, and is therefore directly related to the *Medal Of Honor* franchise, even though they are now bitter, bitter rivals.

HISTORY

CALL OF DUTY 2003 [Multi]

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Activision
DEVELOPER: Infinity Ward
RELEASE: Autumn '05
GENRE: Shooter
PLAYERS: 1 (Online TBA)

CONCEPT

More war, but this time with wider battle areas, smarter AI and graphics that even depict phone lines swinging in a breeze.

YES THEY DID, THEY INVADED POLAND!

World War II is back and this time it's quicker, more intense. Sounds like the usual breathy voice-over for another sequel, but then it's what this second call back to the Forties frontlines is all about. It's improved by technology, has artificially intelligent as well as predestined battlefield choreography, and comes with a 'vignette' mission system that enables you to play through from the viewpoint of one of four characters (two British, one American, one Russian) in order, or to flip between perspectives after each engagement.

The conflict will take place in the fashionable places of wartime Europe and North Africa; D-Day gets a look in with a fearsome cliff assault on Pointe du Hoc (think *Saving Private Ryan* with grappling hooks) as well as the battle of El Alamein, and another look at the gargantuan battle for Stalingrad.

Infinity Ward has built a new war experience from the ground up using new graphical tricks and a broader outlook on how to convey the total sensorial assault of combat. Over 20,000 lines of dialogue have been recorded so your squad will have plenty to say, and this time it's relevant to what's going on. The enemy AI is smart enough to know how to take cover, how to perform flanking manoeuvres and how to use smoke grenades for concealment.

Your men are bright enough to point out enemy positions by telling you precisely where they are. If they're behind a truck, they'll mention the truck; you'll no longer have to look for tracer fire to suggest an enemy presence, or rely on surround sound. You will, however, be able to guess the distance of a gunshot due to its unique report. Previously, shots further away just sounded quieter; now they take on all the properties of an explosion heard at a distance as they crackle through the air.

While the graphics have been built with a greater eye for detail (you can even see serial numbers on weapons) it's the free-flowing and open play of the battlefield that adds the greatest whiff of enhancement to a genre that has yet to give the player the smell of cordite.

Listening to the observations of your squad will be vital since enemies no longer sit in the same locations with the same battle plan. They move around and won't wait for you to give their existence meaning. This is coupled with the fact that missions are no longer point-to-point affairs where your memory of previous attempts is as valuable as a good aim.

Like *Medal Of Honor: European Assault*, you can take on missions in the order you want. The random variables are intended to create a deep and involving experience where battles are never the same, and friendly troops *are* friendly and helpful (their helpfulness adding to any sorrow for their death, especially when they point out a sniper and are the first to take a bullet).

It's fortunate for developers that WWII had so much going on, but it seems the future of the genre isn't in exploring every single war zone, rendering it with the clarity of the latest graphics drivers. It's in broadening the sensations of war through greater involvement with your surroundings, and by providing a more organic combat experience where set pieces exist but aren't computer-controlled firework displays.

SQUAD, DIS-MISS

You can now hold your breath before pulling the trigger of your sniper rifle. That, right there, was a new feature in *Call Of Duty*. One feature you won't be seeing, however, is any squad control during the single-player experience. There are as yet no announcements for what malarkey will be available for the online modes, but play single-player and although your men will talk to you, you won't be able to tell them diddly squat.

> "YOUR MEN ARE NOW SMART ENOUGH TO POINT OUT ENEMY POSITIONS BY TELLING YOU PRECISELY WHERE THEY ARE"



The cliffs of Pointe du Hoc need to be climbed with rocket-assisted grappling hooks. A task which is made considerably harder by Germans with grenades.



THE WARRIORS





■ Developer Rockstar Toronto has painstakingly recreated each gang member's face, right down to the oh-so-manly stubble.

"WARRIORS, COME OUT TO PLAY-I-AY…WARRIORS, COME OUT TO PLAY-I-AY"

PS2 **Walter Hill's seminal film *The Warriors* has earned itself a place in film history since its release in 1979.** And rightly so, because despite the slightly camp gang members and now extremely dated setting, *The Warriors* has always represented something much larger: urban underground culture, primal rage and an instinct to be part of a gang to aid your own survival. It succinctly tapped into youth culture at that time and, to some extent, does so even today.

With that, Rockstar and its Toronto developer have finally given gamers a peek into Coney Island, the home of The Warriors and partial setting for one of said publisher's best-kept secrets over the last few years. Originally announced back in 2002 when the publisher revealed that Barking Dog Studios had become Rockstar Vancouver, and that Rockstar Canada had changed its name to Rockstar Toronto, *The Warriors* has been deliberately kept under wraps since, surfacing every now and then whenever Rockstar announces its yearly financial results. While not too much was revealed at Rockstar's booth at E3 this year, we have been privy to a few details that should finally shed some light on this almost mythical project.

The Warriors features a huge open-level structure, with Coney Island re-created street lamp for street lamp from the era when the film premiered. What's more, if rumours are to be believed, the game will play out like a modern day *Final Fight* or *Streets Of Rage*. It's a genre sadly missed and in dire need of reinvention, and who better to resurrect it than Rockstar.

Beginning almost six months prior to the opening reel of the film, the game opens on Coney Island where you operate out of the The Warriors' HQ, which also serves as the game's hub. From here you have the option to meet and talk with other gang members, take on numerous missions inspired by the novel penned by author Sol Yurick and embark on other stages that are lifted from scenes that had to be annexed from the original theatrical release.

The gameplay mechanics are a mixture of hand-to-hand combat fused with all kinds of weaponry such as bottles, knives and baseball bats. Furthermore, say, for example, you find yourself wielding a bottle which is then smashed over an opponent's head, the weapon's function then alters so you can use it to stab another foe. As for bouts of fisticuffs, the controls are simple enough to master in a short time and once you've perfected one Warrior's brawling, the others follow suit with certain gang members' punches, kicks and throws being more powerful than the others.

If this all sounds too bland to be a Rockstar game then you're mistaken; the violence in the game is brutal and accompanied by some stellar sound effects, guaranteed to make you wince at least once or twice. Spicing things up a little is the ability to dish out orders to gang members to either attack, remain still or follow, coupled with the option to steal from shops, rob car stereos and mug innocent passers by, which in turn provides currency to trade for health.

Due for release later this year, *The Warriors* is shaping up to be typically Rockstarish, but will it be as influential in the gaming world as Walter Hill's classic piece of filmmaking was for cinema? Hopefully all will become clear nearer the release date.

"THE WARRIORS FEATURES A HUGE OPEN-LEVEL STRUCTURE, WITH CONEY ISLAND RE-CREATED STREET LAMP FOR STREET LAMP"

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Rockstar
DEVELOPER: Rockstar Toronto
RELEASE: Sept '05
GENRE: Action
PLAYERS: 1-2

CONCEPT

■ Based on the 1979 film of the same name, *The Warriors* lets you take control of the Coney Island gang on their perilous journey home.

WHO'S WHO

Although there are dozens of people in *The Warriors*, the game primarily focuses on the nine members who embark on a journey through the back streets of a seedy New York. Cleon is the leader of the gang followed closely by Swan who takes on the mantle when Cleon is framed for the murder of Cyrus, the most powerful gang leader in New York City. The remaining seven are the hot-tempered Ajax; the spiritual but lethal Cochise; the quiet Cowboy; Fox, who meets his end at the hands of a cop after he's thrown in front of a subway train; Rembrandt, the youngest of the gang; the kung fu-skilled Snow and the constantly whining Vermin. All of these characters boast their own unique attributes and fighting styles, which thankfully don't require you to master new button combinations each time you switch between them.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

After having its name changed from Rockstar Canada to Rockstar Toronto, said developer has remained off the radar ever since, quietly working away over the past three years crafting Rockstar's latest venture, *The Warriors*. Rockstar itself is the driving force behind the phenomenal series of *Grand Theft Auto* games.

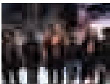
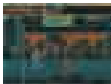
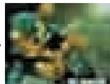
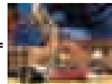
HISTORY

- **GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS** 2004 [PS2]
- **STATE OF EMERGENCY** 2002 [PS2]
- **MAX PAYNE** 2001 [PC]

"IF RUMOURS ARE TO BE BELIEVED, THE GAME WILL PLAY OUT LIKE A MODERN-DAY FINAL FIGHT OR STREETS OF RAGE"

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

THEY ARE 100,000 STRONG. HOW TOUGH ARE YOU?


THE FILM
+

STREETS OF RAGE
+

MANHUNT
=

THE WARRIORS





All gangs have to leave their mark and The Warriors are no exception.


eMag

BURNOUT LEGENDS





DETAILS

FORMAT: PSP
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
DEVELOPER: Criterion
RELEASE: Sept '05
GENRE: Driving
PLAYERS: 1 (2-4 online/via Wi-Fi)

CONCEPT

Drive like a mentalist to get to the finish line first. The simplest ideas make the best games.

"SAFEST OF ALL"? SHUT IT, NUMAN

It might be obvious to many of you but we love *Burnout 3*. Like a parent loves their child, like a glutton loves food and like the Russians love their children too, if Sting's question were to ever be answered. How happy would we be, then, to have a portable version of a game that feels very much like *Takedown* at our fingertips wherever we may find ourselves? Stretch your arms out as far apart as they'll go. That happy? No. Happier still? Yes. Awesome.

In fairness, *Legends* isn't strictly *Burnout 3* – sure, it uses a lot of the style, mechanics and many of the same cars and courses, but Criterion is keen to stress that this isn't just a port of *Takedown*. Far from it, in fact, and as well as the elements taken from our favourite racer of last year, *Legends* draws upon the other highlights of the series. Pursuit mode? Check. Airport Terminal courses? Check. Hot rods? Check. In fact, every good bit of the *Burnout* franchise has been collated on one UMD for your enjoyment. It's almost as though Criterion knows exactly what we want.

This would also explain the new functionality that's being added for *Legends*. Making full use of the PSP's Wi-Fi goodness, players will be able to stage events with up to four participants (although six is the eventual goal) and you won't even need a copy of the game to enjoy the revelry – like the DS's download play options, players will be able to join races with minimal course and car options without even owning *Legends*.

There's also an element of 'Gotta catch 'em all!' going on with the multiplayer, so each UMD will come pre-loaded with one of several unique cars. The only way to obtain the ones you're missing is to beat someone who has one of them in multiplayer; if you can track the whole set down there's even a bonus vehicle in it for you. And thanks to technology, you won't even need to hunt high and low for other players to challenge – online play means you'll be able to race the world's elite whenever you please.

With the PSP's European launch now scheduled for September, there's every chance that *Burnout Legends* will meet the same date. We certainly hope so – if we have to wait much longer than that, we might have to take to crashing real cars to tide us over…





While the game might still have a combat emphasis, you're still rewarded for driving like a nutcase.

"THE BEST BITS OF ALL THREE BURNOUTS ON ONE DISC? DON'T MIND IF WE DO…"

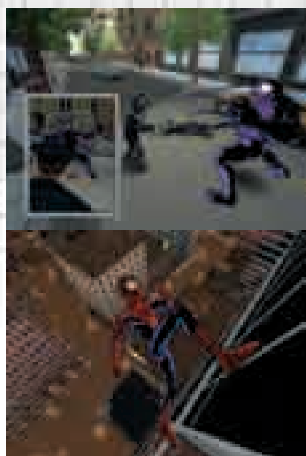
SHOWCASE

MORE THINGS TO WATCH FOR ON THE GAMING HORIZON

ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN

CEL-Y ENOUGH TO MAKE YOU VENOM-OUS

Format: PS2, Xbox, Cube
Origin: US
Publisher: Activision
Developer: Treyarch
Genre: Action
Players: 1



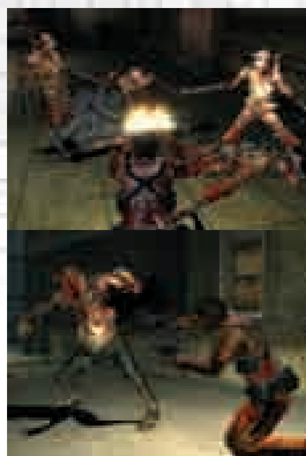
We're not quite sure how we feel about the news that about half of *Ultimate Spider-Man* will be played as Venom. Fight him, sure – he's the evil alien version of the Spidey outfit, so we're looking forward to giving him a good clobbering while throwing out some ultra-modern Brian Michael Bendis quips. But play as him? That's just plain wrong. Fortunately, Treyarch has improved upon most of the bigger niggles from *Spider-Man 2* (namely the annoying random missions and the dreadful interior boss battles), while wrapping the entire package in a cel-shaded splurge of *Ultimate* superdeformity. Let's hope it doesn't waste Gwen Stacey's death the way the comic did.

RELEASE DATE: TBA '05

THE SUFFERING: TIES THAT BIND

HAVEN'T WE SUFFERED ENOUGH?

Format: PC, PS2, Xbox
Origin: US
Publisher: Midway
Developer: Surreal Software
Genre: Action
Players: 1



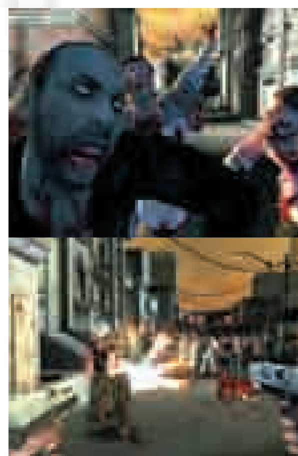
Regular readers will know that we view *The Suffering* as we would a real stint in chokey. However, as Midway has promised that *Ties That Bind* will "surpass the original in every way" we're going to repeal its death sentence for the time being. With the action moved out of the first game's nightmare prison setting and onto the streets of downtown Baltimore, this instalment hopes to forefront poverty and social injustice as anti-hero Torque tries to unravel the conspiracy surrounding his family's demise. Oh, and there'll be loads more Clive Barker-rip-off monsters, and extra levels of Insanity mode that will cause the story to branch. If you're not convinced, that may be because we aren't either.

RELEASE DATE: Q3 '05

CITY OF THE DEAD

ROMERO THE STREETS AND SAVINI THE WORLD

Format: PC, PS2, Xbox
Origin: US
Publisher: Hip Games
Developer: Kuju Entertainment
Genre: Survival Horror
Players: 1



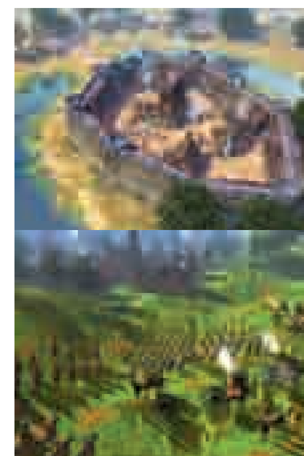
The news of a new George A Romero zombie movie has sent the world into geek frenzy, though after seeing the trailer it's clear the king of undead satire still can't write dialogue any better than George Lucas. In creating a first-person shoot-'em-in-the-head-athon, Hip has also managed to involve splatter wizard par excellence Tom Savini to provide a voice-over for the lead character, William 'Red' McLean. The bad news is that it doesn't look like much of the game will be set in an actual city, but rather on the deserted Isla Morta (Island of the Dead, originality fans) and its top-secret military base over-run with walking corpses. Now that's our kind of package holiday.

RELEASE DATE: Q1 '06

AGE OF EMPIRES III

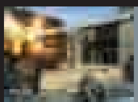
THE AGE OF REALISM

Format: PC
Origin: US
Publisher: Microsoft Game Studios
Developer: Ensemble Studios
Genre: RTS
Players: 1-TBA



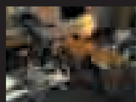
With *Age Of Empires III* picking up where *II* left off, the sudden jump in visual quality will be like switching off *Return Of The Jedi* and putting on *Phantom Menace*, but that's progress for you. This third game promises advanced battle physics, unparalleled visual detail and "the next level of realism". Which we take to mean you really will be dragging a mouse cursor around the screen in plan view. Brand new technologies and civilisations as yet unseen in the series will be featured in a single-player campaign that spans three generations. Ensemble will also be including a 'Home City', so there's no worry about turning all Alexander The Great expansion-happy and then forgetting your roots.

RELEASE DATE: Q3 '05



DELAYED – Rainbow Six: Lockdown (Multi)

■ Ubisoft's fourth instalment in the Clancy franchise finally has a fixed launch date – for September. Thankfully, though, it looks like the wait has led to improvements both on- and offline (or so we're told).



DELAYED – Fantastic Four (Multi)

■ Activision's movie tie-in has been put back by a couple of weeks. As the film is now looking half as rubbish as it did a few months ago, hopefully the game won't be the usual uninspired licensed fare.

THE MATRIX: PATH OF NEO

BLUE PILL? RED PILL? OR AN OVERDOSE OF BOTH?

Format: PC, PS2, Xbox
Origin: US
Publisher: Atari
Developer: Shiny
Genre: Action
Players: 1



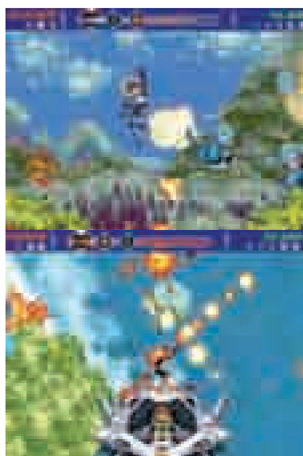
The *Matrix* series (and its tie-in products) is a continued reinforcement of the adage 'don't believe the hype'. That said, Shiny's follow-up to *Enter The Matrix* has been in development for two years, and if the movie's sequels had been given that long between them then they might not have been quite so atrocious. This time, you get to play as modern film's favourite Christ-alike as you follow Keanu's woah-ful performance through the entire trilogy up until his underwhelming blind death. All the movie's characters will reprise their roles, while the Wachowskis have re-scripted and directed the proceedings. But the question remains: does the world still even remotely care about the Matrix?

RELEASE DATE: Q4 '05

GUNSTAR SUPER HEROES

RED HERO? BLUE HERO? OR A COMBINATION OF BOTH?

Format: Game Boy Advance
Origin: US
Publisher: Sega
Developer: Treasure
Genre: Action
Players: 1



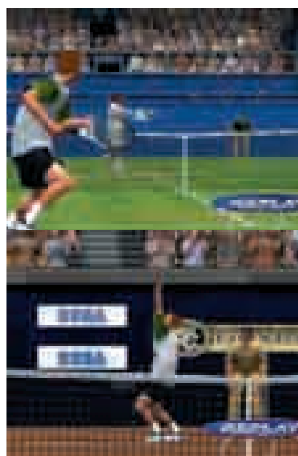
Can it really be ten years since *Gunstar Heroes* first appeared on the Mega Drive? That's a hell of a long time to wait for a sequel, but it looks like the years may have been used wisely. In keeping with the spirit of the original, the Red and Blue heroes are back and are charged with stopping a powerful stone falling into the hands of an evil empire. This time, however, Sega (and development hero Treasure) promises a unique adventure for each character on top of the screen-filling boss sprites. Frankly, we're hard-pressed to find a downside to any of this news, especially since at least one level from the original *Gunstar Heroes* will be included as a bonus extra – and it plays just as well as it ever did. Hurrah.

RELEASE DATE: Q3 '05

VIRTUA TENNIS: WORLD TOUR

ADVANTAGE: SEGA. NEW BALLS PLEASE

Format: PlayStation Portable
Origin: UK
Publisher: Sega
Developer: Sumo Digital
Genre: Sports
Players: 1-4



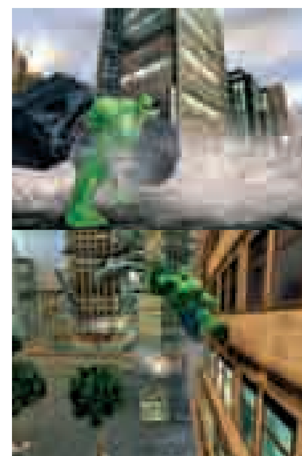
Sega hasn't had the best run of success of late, as anyone who has seen its US sales figures for last year will know. However, this PSP version of the classic *Virtua Tennis* will definitely silence the industry voices suggesting that Sega is a dead company. After all, as if the prospect of playing the developer's glorious sports title on Sony's handheld wasn't enough, *World Tour* will boast four-player doubles Wi-Fi link-up as well. Featuring tournaments as well as the titular World Tour mode that enables you to create your own Tom Hanman or Paul Somprus, it's a whole planet's worth of tennis greatness in the palm of your hand. To be frank, we're amazed how close this is to the Dreamcast version…

RELEASE DATE: Q3 '05

THE INCREDIBLE HULK: ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION

A CHANGE IS COMING

Format: Xbox, PS2, Cube
Origin: US
Publisher: VU Games
Developer: Radical Games
Genre: Action
Players: 1



After the success of Treyarch's *Spider-Man 2*, it's sandbox cities all the way for Bruce Banner's green alter-ego, with a visual polish by *Ultimates* artist Bryan Hitch. As the comic featured Hulk going all King Kong and killing thousands of innocents he's at least sure to look like a crew-cut badass, while some of the moves on offer – picking up a car and mashing it into metal boxing gloves, anyone? – are bound to make the fanboys happy. You can be a good Hulk or a ne'er-do-well troublemaking Hulk, but if all there is to do is smash cars, tanks and mechs ad nauseam, *The Incredible Hulk* will have a very short shelf life. We're left hoping it will have some brains to it too.

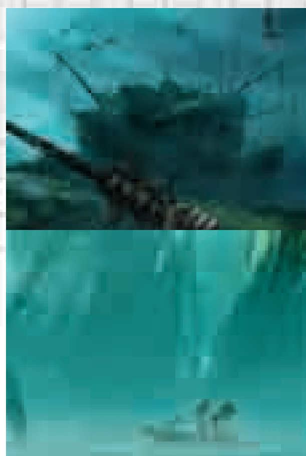
RELEASE DATE: Q2 '05

SHOWCASE

KING KONG

SMALL MONKEYS COOL, GIANT MONKEYS AWESOME

Format: PS2, Xbox, Cube, PC, GBA, DS, PSP
Origin: France
Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft Montpellier
Genre: FPS / Action Adventure
Players: 1



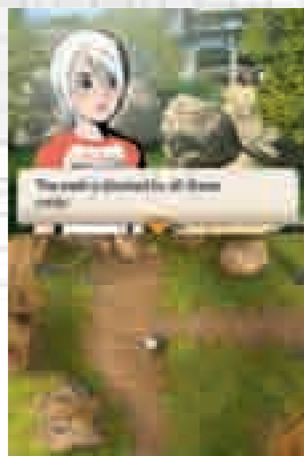
While E3 didn't offer any sign of the city-stomping ape himself, we at least got a glimpse of what Peter Jackson's *King Kong* reimagining will look like before the giant reaches New York. And it looks a bit like Middle-earth, to be honest. Viewed from two perspectives (an FPS for the human hero, a third-person brawler for Kong himself), what we've seen gives seems to suggest that Michael Ancel has done the impossible and created an interesting game out of a rather constricting licence. We're cautiously optimistic that Ubisoft will be able to do justice to the movie. Besides, what other game lets you fill Jack Black's boots?

RELEASE DATE: NOV '05

ANOTHER CODE: TWO MEMORIES

A DS ADVENTURE ABOUT A DS ADVENTURER

Format: Nintendo DS
Origin: Japan
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Cing Inc
Genre: Adventure
Players: 1



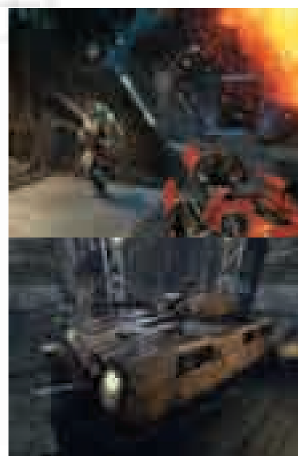
Not so much a point-and-click as a point-and-touch, jostle, rub, draw and flick, *Another Code: Two Memories* tells the story of Ashley, a teenager who uses her DS to solve the mystery surrounding the death of her scientist parents. Making the most of the two screens, *Another Code* requires players to genuinely interact with the environment using the stylus, and comes across as an anime-influenced combination of *Broken Sword* and *Myst* (the top screen displays manga panels to show interactions based on the position of the character on the navigation screen underneath). It's all sounding a bit fruity, but some jubilant reviews in the Japanese press have resulted in a confirmed European release.

RELEASE DATE: 24 JUNE

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2007

THE FUTURE IS NOW

Format: PC
Origin: US
Publisher: Midway
Developer: Epic Games
Genre: FPS
Players: 1 (Multiplayer TBA)



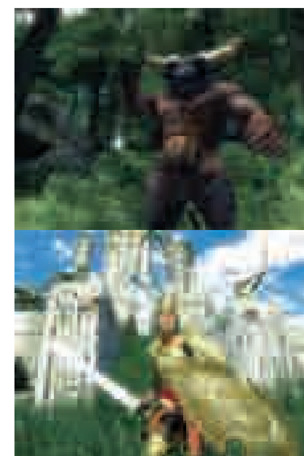
The next *Unreal* title intends to marry the most popular elements of *Unreal Tournament* and the original game and wrap them in a shroud of jaw-dropping visual polish. A showcase for the third *Unreal* engine, *UT2007* already boasts of high dynamic range lighting, even more realistic physics and bump offset mapping lighting systems. All-new Conquest mode will focus on capturing Tyridium-yielding territories and warping between the most action-filled areas, while a steep ramp-up in bot intelligence has also been promised; NPCs will apparently now respond better to a wider range of headset commands. Meanwhile, a more comprehensive single-player campaign will also be included, so nobody feels left out.

RELEASE DATE: TBA '06

THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

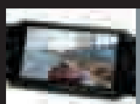
A BIT ELDER, A BIT WISER

Format: PC, Xbox 360
Origin: US
Publisher: 2K Games
Developer: Bethesda Software
Genre: RPG
Players: 1



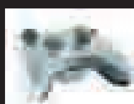
Apparently, Bethesda developed three new combat systems for *Oblivion* before deciding which one to use. The result is a kinetic defend-and-parry system that uses the stats to determine the range of moves available. We mention this first because *Elder Scrolls* players know what to expect so well by now that the change is as likely to upset as it is to excite, though we couldn't be happier at the prospect of some controlled battles to complement the exhaustive exploration. A dynamic compass system will also point towards dungeons, so players are less likely to become lost than in *Morrowind*. Though when a game look this beautiful, we don't really have a problem with getting lost.

RELEASE DATE: TBA '05



DATED – PlayStation Portable (Sony)

■ Sony's wonder-device finally gets a long-overdue and surprisingly strong European release on 1 September, accompanied by 29 games and 19 movies available on UMD.



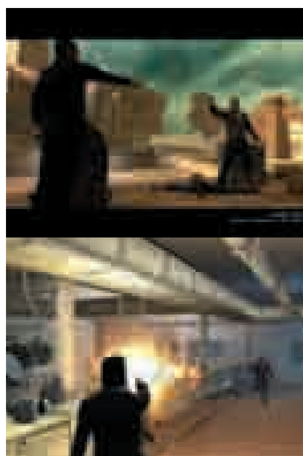
DATED – Xbox 360 (Microsoft)

■ Microsoft's Peter Moore has promised a worldwide release for the next-generation Xbox before the end of 2005, so that should help liven up the already overcrowded Christmas market no end…

INTERVIEW WITH A MADE MAN

ACCLAIM, RECLAIMED

Format: PC, PS2, Xbox
Origin: UK
Publisher: TBA
Developer: Silverback Studios
Genre: Action
Players: 1



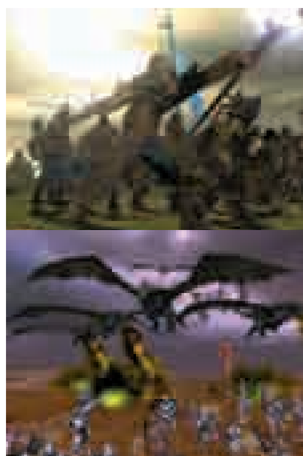
Fifteen staff from Acclaim's defunct Manchester studio had their jobs saved when Silverback Studios was formed by Jon Oldham to pick up its own long-awaited action title. Taking input from real-life mob family boss Bill Bonnanno, *Interview With A Made Man* will follow a mobster's rise through the ranks in a story that takes players from the Vietnamese jungle to the gritty streets of New York. It looks a lot like *Max Payne* so far, but we're hoping *Made Man* will offer a great deal more depth than Take 2's noir shooter. Oldham was optimistic that the game would pick up a publisher at E3, so expect some news on this to emerge in the next couple of weeks.

RELEASE DATE: TBA '05

KINGDOM UNDER FIRE: HEROES

X MARKS THE BATTLEFIELD

Format: Xbox
Origin: US
Publisher: Deep Silver
Developer: Phantagram
Genre: RTS
Players: 1-2



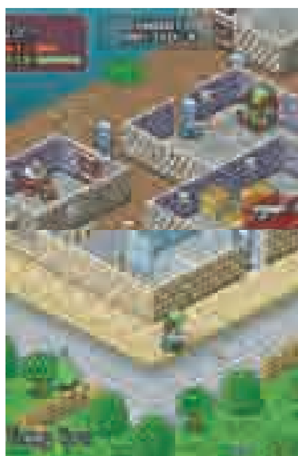
Deep Silver has a policy of recruiting passionate gamers to create its products, and so far this approach seems to have paid off. *X2: The Threat* garnered an armful of awards, while the original *Kingdom Under Fire: The Crusaders* is one of the Xbox's best tactical war titles, delivering all the punch of a *Dynasty Warriors* game but with added immersion and empathy. Appropriately, there'll be a greater range of characters in *Heroes*, each with special moves. After some satisfying sales figures, Phantagram is also beefing up the battle engine to feature larger armies and a more diverse range of battle environments, as well as a more developed Live experience. We're looking forward to spending Christmas in the trenches.

RELEASE DATE: Q4 '05

REBELSTAR: TACTICAL COMMAND

TAKE ME TO YOUR GBA

Format: Game Boy Advance
Origin: US
Publisher: Namco
Developer: Codo
Genre: Strategy
Players: 1



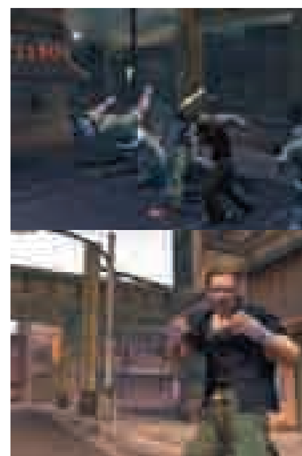
From the developer of the *X-Com* series comes this isometric, turn-based strategy adventure. In 2117, Earth has been invaded by the evil Arelian Empire, who have a slave-race of green brutes called Zorn they have appeased for years with tasty flesh. Players take the role of Jorel (who, sadly, isn't the father of Superman despite the similarity) who must organise his team to eliminate the enemies on each destructible level. Though the graphics look simplistic, *Rebelstar* promises to be fiendishly taxing, as it employs a true line-of-sight system that only enables you to see enemies that can see you and a frugal points-spending action method. Sounds like the perfect GBA title.

RELEASE DATE: Q3 '05

FINAL FIGHT: STREETWISE

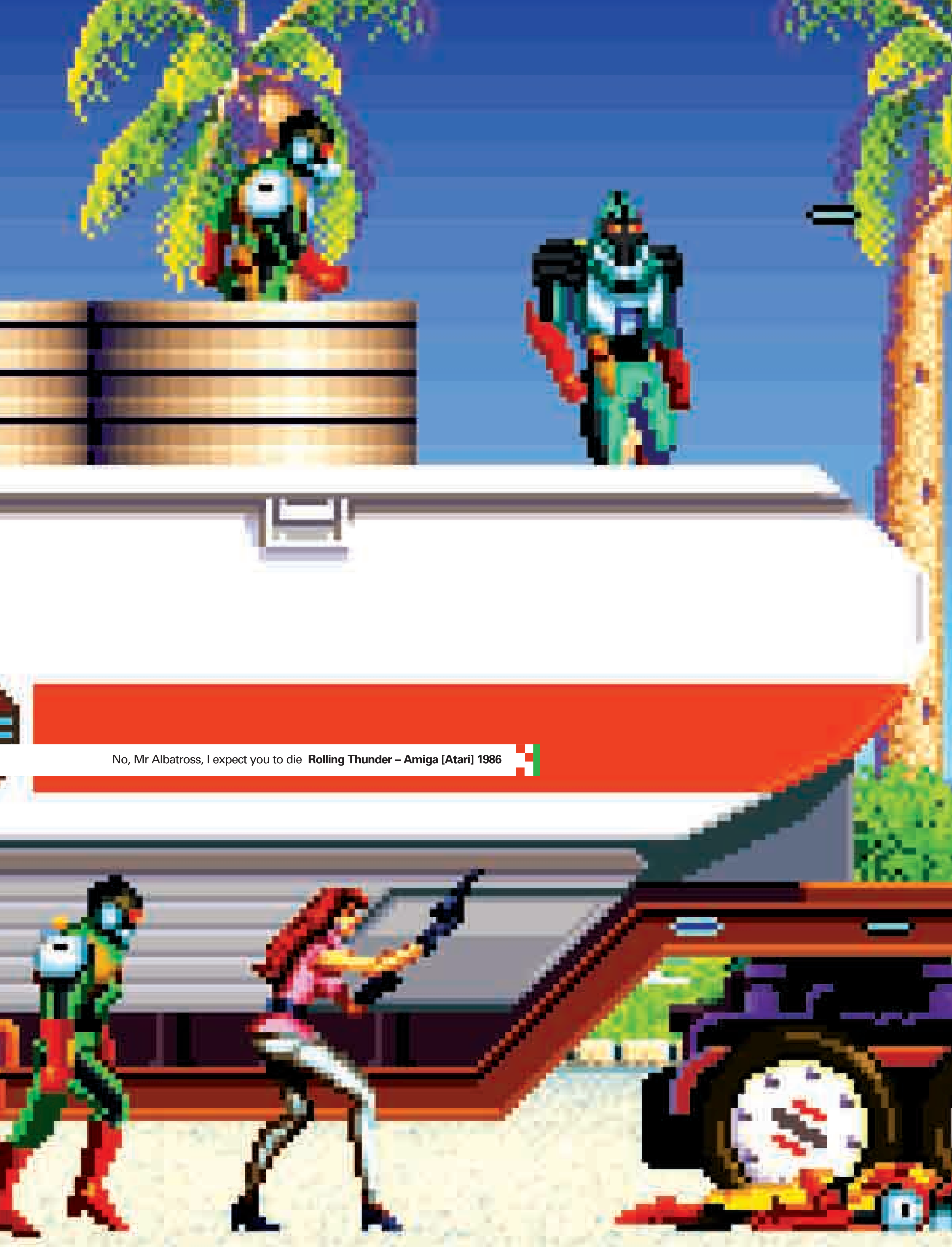
BIG ARMY, SMALL STYLUS

Format: PS2, Xbox
Origin: Japan
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: In-house
Genre: Beat-'em-up
Players: 1



"Your fists are the only thing you can really rely on in this world". Sometimes we despair. When word emerged of a *Final Fight* update, some colleagues welled up. Then we read the press release, and everyone cried. Taking the role of Kyle Travers (brother of Cody), players must search for their kidnapped sibling across Metro City, using the magic of super-combos, a weapon-and-fists-mixing Instinct mode and bullet time brawling. Apparently, the main focus of *Streetwise* will be building "respect", unlocking new fighting styles, "hardcore weapons" (the press release again) and NPC gang support. This is *Final Fight* in name only, and a company with Capcom's heritage should know better.

RELEASE DATE: Q4 '05



No, Mr Albatross, I expect you to die **Rolling Thunder – Amiga [Atari] 1986**



AND SO ANOTHER TWELVE MONTHS SAIL OUT OF VIEW AND ALL WE'RE LEFT WITH IS A PILE OF AWESOME GAMES. QUESTION IS, WHICH ARE THE FAIREST OF THEM ALL?

games™ awards 2005

It seems like only yesterday that we were sifting through the greatest games of 2003 and 2004, trying to pick out highlights for inclusion in last year's awards. Indeed, it seems like only yesterday that the industry's greatest gathered in London for the 2004 **games™** award presentations, over-consumption of alcohol and the best dancing the world had ever seen. Yet here we go again, once more trawling through 12 months of software and sifting out only the very best for nomination.

The drill's the same as last year – the console-specific and Game Of The Year categories have been thrown open to you, the readers. Details of how to cast your votes can be found in the pages that follow. For the rest of the awards, we'll be handing over to a select panel of industry judges who will pick the winner. It's as easy as that. Have a read, get in touch and make your voice heard in declaring the finest gaming achievements of the year. Do it.

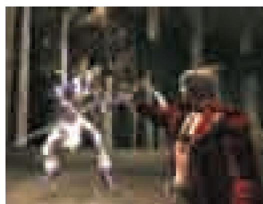
GAME | OF THE YEAR [READERS' CHOICE – CATEGORY A]

ONE GAME TO RULE THEM ALL

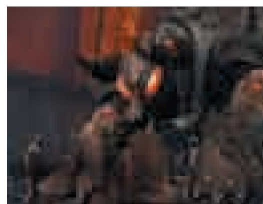
Judging which is the very best game in any 12-month period is never an easy task. That's why we've totally bottled it. It's up to you to pick the game that's kept you entertained the most over the last year.



01 Burnout 3: Takedown
[Multi]
The game almost exclusively responsible for our ruined eyes, Criterion's sublime racer still remains a firm office favourite. And after its shaky start, online play is every bit as awesome as we could have hoped.



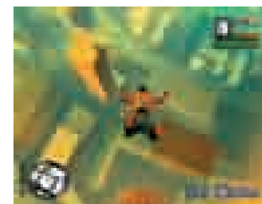
02 Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening
[PS2]
If you like your games brutally hard and sickeningly stylish, chances are you've already drooled over Dante's latest adventure. Capcom comes good with this nigh-on perfect prequel.



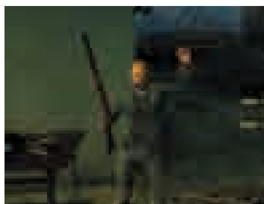
03 God Of War
[PS2]
The potential sleeper hit of the year comes from the unlikeliest of sources – the team behind the *Twisted Metal* games goes Greek with astonishing results. An absolutely stunning mythical adventure.



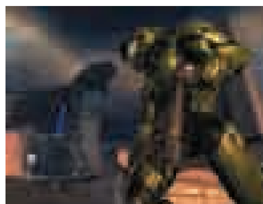
04 Gran Turismo 4
[PS2]
Taking corners safely and tweaking your car before each race may not be everyone's cup of tea but we've yet to see the genre tackled better than in Yamauchi's latest high-speed rubber burner.



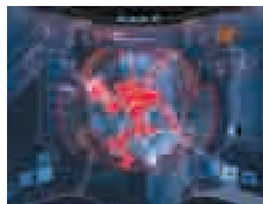
05 Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas
[PS2]
Even if you've been playing this since the day it came out, we'd wager that you still haven't seen everything there is to see in Los Santos, San Fierro and Las Venturas. Like, wow.



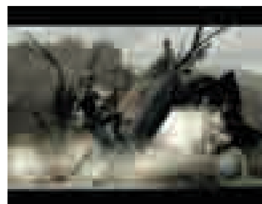
06 Half-Life 2
[PC]
While events conspired to strip a review from our pages month after month, don't assume it means we're not huge fans of Valve's anticipated follow-up. We love that Freeman chap and everything he stands for.



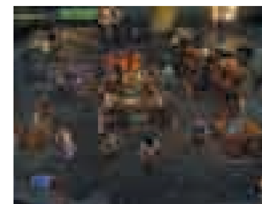
07 Halo 2
[Xbox]
Purple and pink are the new green and brown – Master Chief returns to spray bullets at all manner of nasties both on- and offline. *Halo 2*'s vast Live community is surely testament to its immense popularity.



08 Metroid Prime 2: Echoes
[Cube]
Samus loses all her powers again for the sequel to **games™**'s first perfect 10. More weapons, more moves and a world divided into light and dark regions make for a thrilling and enjoyable first-person adventure.



09 Resident Evil 4
[Cube]
Reinventing a long-running franchise can be tricky but Capcom proved it can be done by replacing zombies with… well, sort-of zombies. Leon's journey into hell on Earth is one that we're never likely to forget.

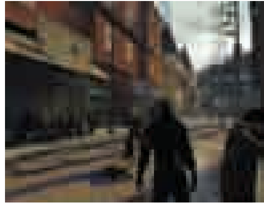


10 World Of Warcraft
[PC]
The MMORPG is hardly a new concept but trust Blizzard to produce a game that almost makes you believe otherwise. Loaded with things to do and places to go, *WoW* really is the gift that keeps on giving.

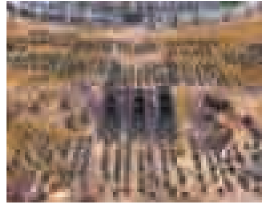
PC | GAME OF THE YEAR [READERS' CHOICE – CATEGORY B]

STRICTLY FOR GAMERS WITH HARDCORE HARDWARE

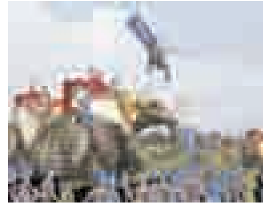
Some say that sitting in front of a monitor to play games is a soulless experience. We say you're obviously playing the wrong games. There's been plenty to click your mouse at over the last year and, better still, you get to decide which game takes home the prize.



01 **Half-Life 2**
An expected second mention for Freeman and pals. Buy thousands of pounds' worth of PC kit, crank up the settings and lose yourself in one of the most wonderfully realised game worlds to date.



02 **Lord Of The Rings: The Battle For Middle-Earth**
In a bid to prove that licensed games needn't be horrible, EA took PCs to the movies with this fantastic RTS title that dropped fans of the trilogy right into the thick of large-scale combat.



03 **Rome: Total War**
We like death. Lots of death. Thanks, then, to Activision and Creative Assembly for joining forces to bring us one of the most epic and thought-provoking strategy games we've ever played.



04 **The Sims 2**
Unfortunately, the **games™** team is dead. Yes, our virtual avatars kicked the proverbial bucket a long time ago but, luckily, we've got our funny looking offspring to continue the wonderful legacy. Genius.

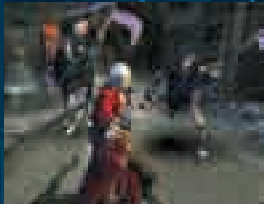


05 **World Of Warcraft**
Fancy seeing you here. The game that simply wouldn't stay on the shelves finds its way into the hearts and minds of the worlds' gamers and it would be criminal for this list to exist without its inclusion.

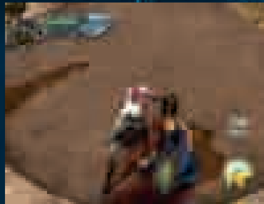
PLAYSTATION2 | GAME OF THE YEAR [READERS' CHOICE – CATEGORY C]

SONY'S LITTLE BLACK BOX CONTINUES TO IMPRESS

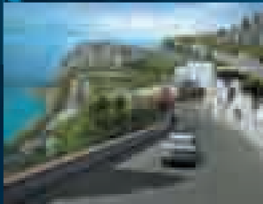
It's taken a while but the PlayStation2 is really coming into its own now. We're seeing games that rival both the other consoles in terms of looks and gameplay and that's exactly what Sony will need if it's to remain competitive. Question is, what's your pick on this year's shortlist?



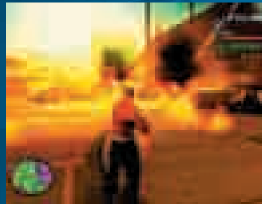
01 **Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening**
Leaping around like men possessed, we've reached the point where sick combos for no reply are now the norm. Put in the time and the flashy massacre is its own reward.



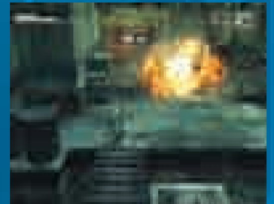
02 **God Of War**
It's been a great year for hack-and-slash action – Sony's Ancient Greek-themed adventure is one of the finest for the PlayStation2 and the promise of a sequel has us very excited indeed. Classically good.



03 **Gran Turismo 4**
With the whole fiasco about online play and delays galore, you had to wonder whether *GT4* would ever reach us. Thankfully, it did and our cravings for mufflers and ratio adjustments have been sated at last.



04 **Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas**
With the imminent release of the Xbox and PC versions, we went back to Los Santos to see where we left CJ. Turns out he was dressed like an Australian's nightmare, ready to take out his helicopter gunship. Awesome.



05 **Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater**
For some reason, we had a sneaking suspicion (no pun intended) that Snake's jungle journey was going to be a bit rubbish. Luckily, Konami proved us wrong with a beautiful stealth adventure loaded with twists.

XBOX | GAME OF THE YEAR [READERS' CHOICE – CATEGORY D]

WHICH GAME WAS BIGGER THAN EVEN THE HULKING MONSTER OF A CONSOLE?

With the Xbox 360 due later this year, it's unclear at this stage whether you'll be seeing this category next year. Still, enjoy it while it's here – there's a quintet of great games to choose from and you get your opinion heard on which is the best of the bunch. Bargain.



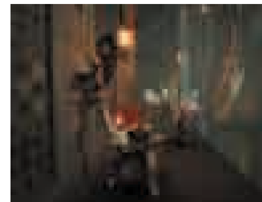
01 **Halo 2**
November brought with it one of the most anticipated games of the year and although the hype smoke has now most certainly cleared, Master Chief's second mission still earns its place here.



02 **Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath**
Oddworld Inhabitants has never been a firm to rush games out and *Stranger's Wrath* is proof of just why this is. A lavishly presented and rock-solid adventure with more than its fair share of great ideas.



03 **Out Run 2**
It's hard not to get a kick out of the simple things in life and they don't come much simpler than *Out Run 2*. Scream through vibrant environments and keep the wife happy with some fancy moves.



04 **Prince Of Persia: Warrior Within**
The Prince returns a little bit angrier in this darker sequel to one of 2003's finest games. Dual wielding and an improved arsenal of moves make for some great clashes with the forces of evil.



05 **TimeSplitters: Future Perfect**
Tired of Master Chief's lack of a sense of urgency? Presenting the turbo-charged and highly addictive *Future Perfect*, the console equivalent of the *Unreal Tournament* titles on PC. Great stuff.

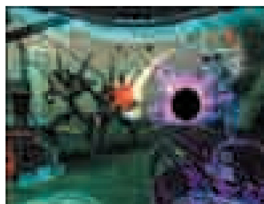
GAMECUBE | GAME OF THE YEAR [READERS' CHOICE – CATEGORY E]

IT'S ALL ABOUT QUALITY NOT QUANTITY, APPARENTLY

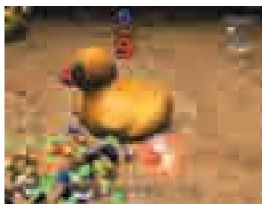
You wouldn't believe how hard it's been to pick our top five GameCube games this year. Not through choice, you understand, but through finding five games that genuinely deserve to be here. Get behind your favourite title and let us know which you want to win.



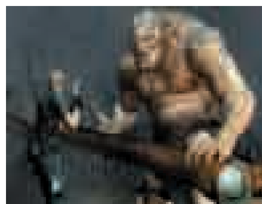
01 Alien Hominid
Made on a shoestring budget from the developers' own pockets, *Hominid* – a stunning little shooter – shows that it's not impossible for a relative unknown to live the dream. Hats off to The Behemoth.



02 Metroid Prime 2: Echoes
Samus' second outing this generation was never going to be anything if not special and, sure enough, Retro Studios didn't disappoint. Bounty hunting has no right to be anywhere near this much fun.



03 Pikmin 2
A unique and charming RTS, Nintendo came good with yet another quality sequel. Plus, ever since playing *Pikmin 2* we've wanted our own little army of flower people to steal and carry things for us.



04 Resident Evil 4
Leon S Kennedy picks up a pistol once more and heads into a remote Spanish village for one of the most engrossing, terrifying and well-realised videogames we've ever seen. A true classic.



05 Viewtiful Joe 2
It's official – 2D isn't dead. Capcom takes its lead from the first game and builds on it accordingly, serving up another slice of great retro platforming action for those with more than a little skill and patience.

HANDHELD | GAME OF THE YEAR [READERS' CHOICE – CATEGORY F]

GOOD THINGS COME IN SMALL PACKAGES, Y'KNOW

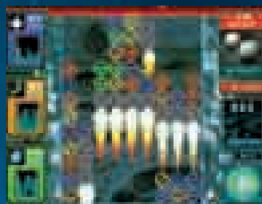
With two new handhelds entering the fray this year, it seemed a little silly to break it down into three separate awards at this early stage. So, for one year only, the three portables go head to head and it'll be your votes that determine which game picks up the gong.



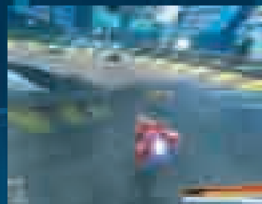
01 Kirby: Canvas Curse
[DS]
Quite possibly the defining game on the DS right now, simply because it proves that the touch screen can be an influential gameplay tool when used properly. Good job, Hal.



02 Metal Slug Advance
[GBA]
Run right and shoot. There's nothing original about the concept but to see the familiar action running so well on the GBA almost brought a tear to our eyes. A great achievement.



03 Meteos
[DS]
Forget slow-paced, methodical puzzle games – *Meteos* goes for the jugular by being insanely fast and incredibly addictive. Plus, it's perfect for the DS; it wouldn't work as well on anything else…



04 WipEout Pure
[PSP]
Highlighting the technological edge the PSP has over its competitors, Sony's hi-tech racer is an absolute joy. And with downloads on the way, we'll be seeing a lot more of *Pure* yet.



05 Zelda: The Minish Cap
[GBA]
A short but sweet foray into the world of Hyrule, Link's latest quest had us fusing Kinstones into the wee small hours. Can the elfin hero do no wrong? It would certainly seem that way.

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

So, those are the nominations in the categories where you decide the winner. You'll probably want to make sure that the game you thought was a turkey doesn't get an award. Or that the game that changed your life gets the credit it deserves.

You can vote in each of the six categories listed above, and once we've collated all the entries the winners will be announced at our gala awards ceremony. Registering your vote couldn't be simpler – all you need is a mobile phone and some nimble fingers…

Examine the categories and nominations and you'll see that each one has been allocated a letter and number. To cast your vote, you simply have to use your mobile to text the word **GAMESTM** followed by the letter of the category, a space and then the number of the game.

For example, if you wanted to vote for *Alien Hominid* as GameCube game of the year, you'd send the message **GAMESTME 01**. Couldn't be easier. Just tap in your vote, then send it to **86025** and have your say…

Lines close on 31 August.

(Text messages cost 25p per entry, plus standard network charges. Services provided by Greenland Interactive, W1T 7PL. Each vote must be sent separately.)

BEST | USE OF A LICENCE

AND NOT A ROGUE AGENT IN SIGHT…

Over to the judges now. It's not often that a licensed game turns out to be truly fantastic but we've seen some great examples over the last year. And *FIFA Street*. Here's our pick of five of the finest meetings of minds…



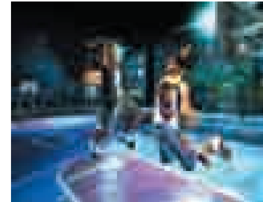
GT-R: FIA GT Racing Game [PC]
The PC market isn't exactly a hotbed for quality racing games but Atari went against the grain with this excellent hardcore racer to challenge the likes of *Gran Turismo 4* and *Forza Motorsport*.



Lego Star Wars [Multi]
While the game may be squarely aimed at the under-tens, there can be no denying that this clash of two of the world's biggest licences is anything but a winner for publisher Eidos.



Lord Of The Rings: The Battle For Middle-Earth [PC]
No more *Dynasty Warriors* clones for us – *Battle For Middle-Earth* placed popular characters in the far more fitting setting of an RTS. The perfect way to waste a lot of hours.



NBA Street V3 [Multi]
Another enjoyable transition from court to street. An obvious choice perhaps, but EA continues to prove that its *Street* brand can still work despite the *FIFA*-shaped stain on its name.

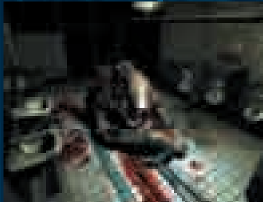


Star Wars Knights Of The Old Republic II: The Sith Lords [Xbox]
Development duties switching to Obsidian hasn't harmed the quality of the franchise. Lightsabers and Wookiees abound in this perfect example of depth and freedom.

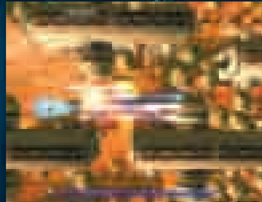
BEST | COMEBACK

REVITALISING OUR FAVOURITE FRANCHISES OF YESTERYEAR

If you can't come up with a new idea for a game, what do you do? Why, you raid the archives, of course. There's usually nothing big or clever about churning out new versions of old games but, occasionally, it's done particularly well and that's what we're here to celebrate.



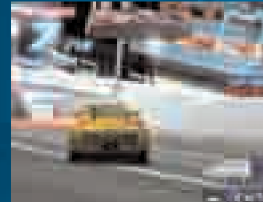
Doom 3 [Multi]
Okay, so it isn't really *Doom* in anything other than name, but in reinventing the series Activision and id brought it into the 21st Century for a whole new audience. A triumphant return.



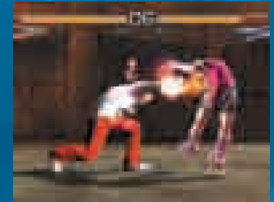
Gradius V [PS2]
With Treasure on board, there was no way this sequel to Konami's classic shooter could go wrong. The sumptuous side-scrolling is pretty much everything we wanted.



Out Run 2 [Xbox]
It's been a long time coming but after all the 'will it/won't it' arguments, it's great to finally see *Out Run 2* on Xbox. A lovely old-school racer that brings back a worrying amount of memories.



Ridge Racer [PSP]
Namco's best-of compilation surprised us all when it turned out to be a super-smooth, super-quick handheld feast. When it comes to portable racing, you don't need to look any further.

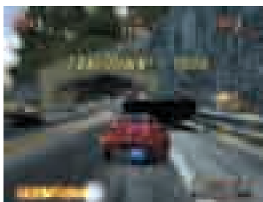


Tekken 5 [Multi]
Okay, so *Tekken 4* was only a couple of years ago but this is a different kind of comeback – a return to form, if you will. King, Jack, Nina and co all return to duke it out in style once more.

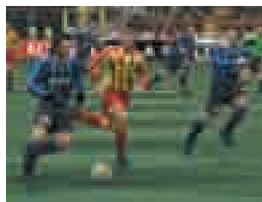
BEST | MULTIPLAYER

BECAUSE FLYING SOLO ISN'T THE ONLY WAY TO GO

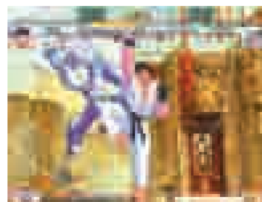
There's only so long you can sit in a darkened room playing games on your own before people start to say bad things about you. The solution is to invite them over and get them to sit in a darkened room with you while you bap them into the middle of next week with a fantastic game. Or do it online. Oh, the options.



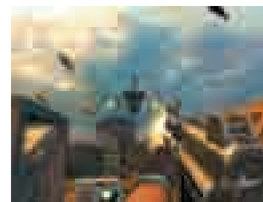
Burnout 3: Takedown [Multi]
Is there any feeling greater than ramming a 'friend' into a solid concrete wall and seeing his car implode? Taking two 'friends' down at once, of course. Criterion, we love you. Really.



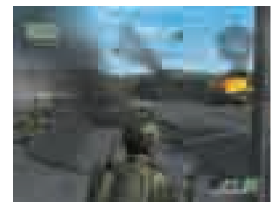
Pro Evolution Soccer 4 [Multi]
The game that provokes more swearing than Tourettes finds its way into our shortlist again. It's riddled with annoyances but that doesn't stop the masses drifting towards it every lunchtime.



Street Fighter: Anniversary Collection [Xbox]
Capcom's classic duo has seen more versus play than almost any other game this year. Mess up a move around these parts and you can expect to get a faceful of punches…



TimeSplitters: Future Perfect [Multi]
Practise offline against bots, go online, realise you're all but entirely lacking in skills. That's pretty much the progression of *Future Perfect*, but online or off it's an absolute riot.



Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon 2 [Multi]
Forget the decidedly ropey single-player game; it's online where *Ghost Recon 2* truly excels. Any Xbox Live game that lets you play 16-player co-op is an absolute winner in our books.

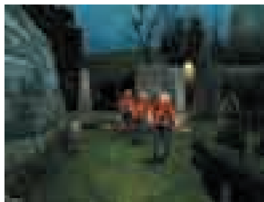
BEST | VISUALS

THE GAMES THAT MADE OUR EYES SMILE

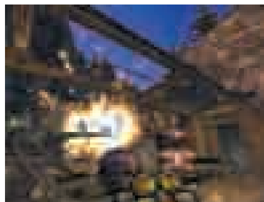
There's more to a good game than just good graphics, of that there can be no denial. But because it's so much easier to get drawn in when the whole thing is so very solid, realistic or believable, it often helps immeasurably to be pretty. Just like life, really.



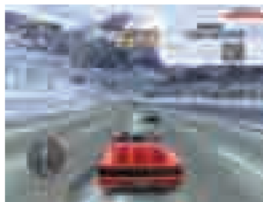
Doom 3
[Multi]
Aside from the fact it all looks a bit synthetic, there's little that can be faulted in id's franchise resurrection. Lighting, set-pieces and clever modelling and mapping all did the genre proud.



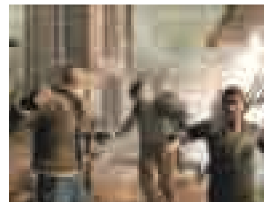
Half-Life 2
[PC]
"Freeman, what are you doing here?" It's obvious, really. Seamlessly blending a stunning game environment with interactive physics really won the day (perhaps the year) for Valve.



Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath
[Xbox]
Few developers can reach so far into the imagination as Oddworld Inhabitants and it shows here – this surreal yet splendid game world is one of the most original we've seen for years.



Out Run 2
[Xbox]
It did it. Sega managed to make the game you saw in your head while playing the original *Out Run* all those years ago. Colourful, crisp and clean, few games boast this level of polish.



Resident Evil 4
[Cube]
Capcom's shocker wouldn't have had half the impact if it had looked anything less than beautiful. No worries there – the Cube is pushed to its limits as detailed enemies fill the screen.

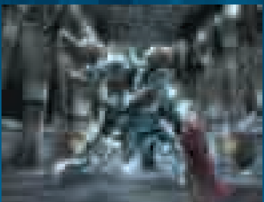
BEST | SOUND

SERVING UP A WEALTH OF SONIC PLEASURES

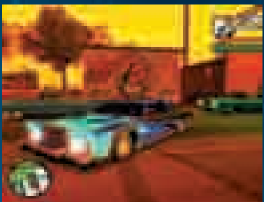
It's the unsung hero of many a game. Precious few people sit up and take notice of just how essential the audio element is to any gaming experience. But we do. And that makes us better people. Here's our pick of the year's finest ear candy, if you will.



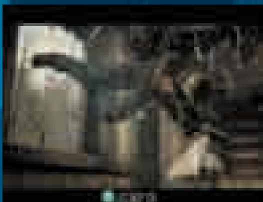
Burnout 3: Takedown
[Multi]
While the soundtrack may not be to everyone's tastes and Stryker was, um, 'an issue', smashing spot effects and surround sound have seldom been used to this kind of wince-inducing level.



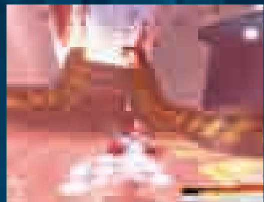
Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening [PS2]
Whether it's Dante wisecracking at Hell's finest, the thumping and intense action 'choons' or simply the atmospheric effects, it's hard to see how anyone could turn *Devil May Cry 3* down.



Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas
[PS2]
It's safe to say game soundtracks shouldn't be this good. Faith No More, NWA, Jane's Addiction, James Brown, The Who, Kiss, Guns 'N' Roses… Rockstar picked some top tunes.



Resident Evil 4
[Cube]
You've heard the monks chanting from the next room. You've heard the villagers scream at each other. You've heard the atmospheric music set the mood. You know why this is here.

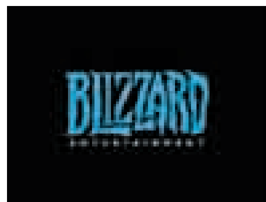


WipEout Pure
[PSP]
The PSP's internal speakers may not be up to much but bang in a pair of headphones and it's impossible not to appreciate the synergy of licensed tunes and booming effects. Good stuff.

BEST | DEVELOPER

WHY SHOULD THE PUBLISHERS TAKE ALL THE CREDIT?

With our monthly Community pieces, it's great to see behind the scenes of so many respected companies and find that, generally, the guys that make the games aren't really any different to you or I. Except for the fact that they're better at making games than us. Much better, in the cases of the teams below…



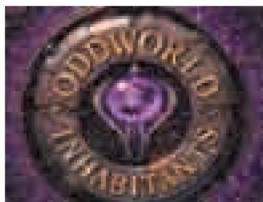
Blizzard
Having totally bottled releasing *StarCraft Ghost* any time in the near future, Blizzard's only offering in the last 12 months has been *World Of Warcraft*. Such is its quality, though, the American firm makes the grade regardless.



Capcom
Capcom's studios have a had a year that you'd be hard pressed to describe as anything other than staggering – continuations of the *Resident Evil*, *Devil May Cry* and *Viewtiful Joe* franchises really made its year.



Nippon Ichi
It's no real secret that we're big fans of Nippon Ichi and its mission to keep the 2D dream alive but regardless, the likes of *Phantom Brave* and *La Pucelle* mean that its omission here would be criminal.



Oddworld Inhabitants
Another one-hit wonder. Abe's parents may not have seen the little guy all year but their sole title, *Stranger's Wrath*, is easily strong enough to propel Oddworld Inhabitants into this year's list of high flyers.



Ubisoft
Having just missed out on nominations in almost every category so far, it seems only right that Ubisoft gets its mention here. For sheer consistency throughout the year, it's hard to fault this company.

BEST | PUBLISHER

GETTING THE GREAT GAMES TO THE PUBLIC

Having a great game is one thing; getting it known and getting it out there is quite another. But it's all too easy for publishers to rely on key brands rather than pushing the envelope, so which firm has put on the best spread of titles in the last 12 months?



Activision
Having enjoyed massive commercial success with *Call Of Duty, Star Wars Battlefront, Mercenaries* and *Doom 3* as well as critical acclaim for titles like *KOTOR II* and *THUG 2*, it's been one hell of a year for Activision.



Capcom
Given that it publishes most of its own titles, it should come as no surprise to see Capcom rocking this category as well as Best Developer, thanks to Dante, Leon and Joe. Is it an unbeatable team?



Electronic Arts
Stop booing already. The repulsive *FIFA Street* will probably still be number one when this mag hits the shelves but even that can't overshadow greats like *Oddworld, TimeSplitters* and *Burnout 3*.



Nintendo
While the GameCube release schedule may be about as long as a list of good Davilex games, strong support for its handheld units and the odd fantastic 'Cube title see the Japanese firm through to the final five.



Ubisoft
Like Capcom, Ubisoft also deals primarily in its own titles, but by branching out and publishing other people's games (like *Champions: Return To Arms*) the Ubisoft brand is becoming increasingly well known.

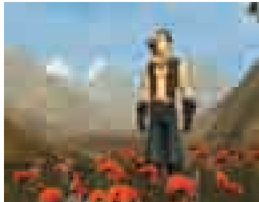
BEST | ORIGINAL IP

WOW – IT'S LIKE NOTHING WE'VE EVER SEEN BEFORE

It's all sequels these days. In our day… actually, it was just as bad. There'll always be a place for fresh characters and ideas in this world full of titles that end in numbers, and the following are the house favourites from the past 365 days.



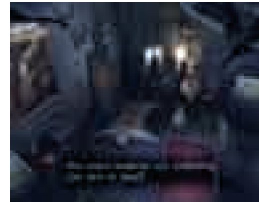
Alien Hominid
[Multi]
The genre might be nothing new but it's never been done with this level of style and humour before. *Alien Hominid* is a fantastic shooter and we hope to see its hero again.



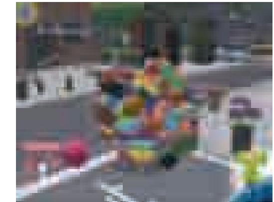
Fable
[Xbox]
Molyneux's game of life may not have been as customisable as was promised but at least it wasn't *Populous* again. Fingers crossed, a sequel could come much closer to the original ideal.



God Of War
[PS2]
Kratos' arrival was perfectly timed for him to squeeze into this year's Awards race and if the hints on the game disc itself are to be believed, we haven't seen the last of him. Which is nice.



Haunting Ground
[PS2]
While it may have been an evolution of *Clock Tower*, this had a unique charm, and with Hewie the dog by your side there was a feeling of camaraderie few solo games can rival.

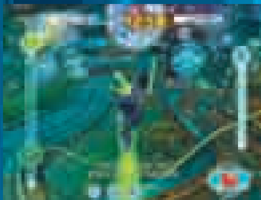


Katamari Damacy
[PS2]
Namco makes rolling around collecting stuff as enjoyable as it could ever be and the impending sequel promises to be better still. "Baaah, bah, bah, bah, bah, bah, bah…"

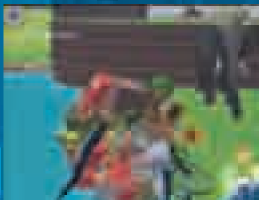
BEST | INNOVATION

BECAUSE MAKING AN FPS OR RTS WOULD BE ALL TOO EASY

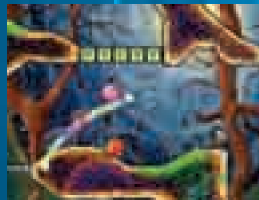
New mechanics, new ideas and new ways of playing – that's what we're celebrating in this category and, as you'll see from the list below, it's been a good year indeed for ambitious games. It's just a shame many of them didn't actually work. Sigh.



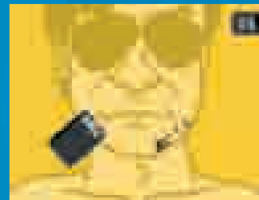
EyeToy: Antigrav
[PS2]
As with most EyeToy titles, *Antigrav* makes up in originality and new gameplay what it loses in accuracy and depth. Developer Harmonix continues to be at the forefront of gaming innovation.



Katamari Damacy
[PS2]
Pitching a game based on rolling around a detritus-collecting ball can't have been an easy task. Regardless, from concept to control, Namco delivered a fresh and new experience.



Kirby: Canvas Curse
[DS]
Amid cries that the DS's touch screen is just a gimmick comes Kirby's latest adventure, proof if it were needed that new gameplay experiences are possible with this new technology.



Wario Ware: Twisted!
[GBA]
With the motion sensor-equipped *Twisted!* you get to look like an absolute nutcase – sitting on the bus craning your neck over an upside-down SP is far more fun than it looks.



Zelda: Four Swords Adventure
[Cube]
The final push for connectivity needed quadruple Links. While it took four players and four GBAs to really enjoy it, it showed that Nintendo's connective dream was a potential reality.



The Players

BEING CHOSEN BY MICROSOFT TO PROVIDE A LAUNCH TITLE FOR THE XBOX 360 MAY BE A GREAT OPPORTUNITY, BUT IT ALSO COMES WITH ITS FAIR SHARE OF PROBLEMS. DAN CERMAK KNOWS THIS BETTER THAN MOST…

DAN CERMAK
VOLITION

Game developers are going through a tough time at the moment. Although the coming of a new generation of consoles provides fresh and exciting opportunities, the pressure to perform well and to use this new technology in the best possible way is something that's haunting many studios. The people who are likely to be feeling this the most are those working for companies that have been chosen to provide titles that will launch alongside the consoles and give that first glimpse as to what the machines are actually capable of.

Volition is one of these companies, and vice president of product development Dan Cermak seems confident that delivering the quality that's expected of it isn't going to be a problem. "There is a lot to be proud of with *Saint's Row*," he says of his studio's Xbox 360 launch title. "Our goal was to look at open-world gaming as a new genre and therefore deal specifically with the wants and needs of the open-world player. It's a game that will support the advancement of the player and is focused on the fun and mayhem of just running around in an open city environment."

Sure, it sounds much like what you'd expect a developer to say about their upcoming title, but Cermak's CV shows that he certainly knows a thing or two about the industry. After starting as an independent author writing strategy guides for C64 and Atari games in 1985 he went on to notch up 11 years' worth of directing and producing experience with SSI. "I have had my hand in dozens and dozens of games," he says, but surely with so many titles under your belt it means that creativity and innovation become far more difficult? "Actually, we go through a pretty intensive process to generate new ideas and we see quite a few come out of it," Cermak assures us. "The issues come from whether a studio spending many millions of dollars in development can afford to take a bet on a new genre or an idea that is too far from the mainstream. It is a constant struggle within the industry."

Of course, with Volition's latest title, *Saint's Row*, we're not really going to be seeing any of these risks, rather a title that's attempting to compete with the *Grand Theft Auto* series – a bold move. undoubtedly. So what does Cermak think Volition has that will allow it to take on such a formidable set of games? "In the past we have had two types of games going on in the studio with two engines and two teams," he tells us. "There has been some cross-utilisation but we feel it wasn't enough. We hope that the benefits gained by building off a core technology coupled with the variety of games that can be done within the 'open-world' environments will allow us the creative variety needed to perform."

Whether this proves to be enough will be revealed towards the end of the year when we finally manage to get an Xbox 360 into our living rooms, an event that all developers are now looking towards and that will be a key element in the future plans of all in the business of bringing us videogames. "I think the next generation will require that all developers focus on design and games will get better," says Cermak. "Once the standards are set with graphics and everyone has the ability to come close to or match that standard then the only real way products will differentiate themselves will be through the design of the gameplay – a greater focus on how the environments respond to the player, AI and all those things that give a player choice within a constrained environment."

A greater selection of quality titles certainly sounds good to us, but it'll be sad to see our beloved current-generation consoles slip away. Some length of overlap has come to be expected but has Volition got any plans to continue producing titles for the Xbox and PS2 or has that ship sailed? "We are continuing to grow the company with a focus on next-gen products," Cermak concludes. "Getting the right people in the right positions is the key to any effective organisation and I guess that's the focus for us in the near term." That's progress, we suppose. 

Saint's Row was previewed in issue 32 and will be an Xbox 360 launch title.

"ONCE THE STANDARDS ARE SET WITH GRAPHICS THE ONLY REAL WAY PRODUCTS WILL DIFFERENTIATE THEMSELVES WILL BE THROUGH THE GAMEPLAY"

DAN CERMAK

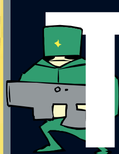
COMMUNITY

EVERY ISSUE, **games™** VISITS A DIFFERENT DEVELOPER. THIS MONTH, WE'RE ASCENDING TO OUTER SPACE TO FIND THE BEHEMOTH

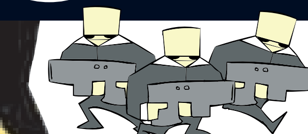


AMONG THE TALES OF FLEDGLING DEVELOPERS GOING UNDER, THERE'S THE ODD SUCCESS STORY. SWAMPED BY TOYS, T-SHIRTS AND PILES OF CRAZY SKETCHES, THE BEHEMOTH IS ONE SUCH EXAMPLE…

San Diego, California, is home to The Behemoth, probably one of the best developers that you've never heard of. The studio was established in January 2003 by Tom Fulp, John Baez, Dan Paladin and Brandon LaCava when they realised the end was nigh for their previous employers. Setting up their own company meant they could avoid their otherwise inevitable fate of working for 'the man' again. Entirely self-funded, all investment in the company has come from the founding quartet and their families and friends – a risky move, sure, but one that can only be viewed with admiration. Boosting revenue with all manner of independently produced merchandise, the firm has very quickly turned a basic Flash game into a cult franchise, at the heart of which lies a single figurehead – Alien Hominid.



THE BEHEMOTH

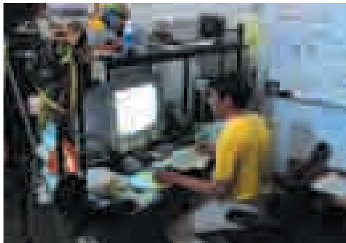


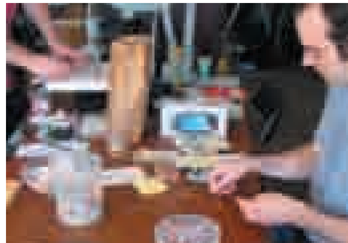


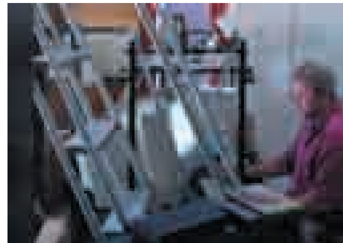
A little helicopter. Awesome. Every home should have at least one.



Independence is a real blessing for The Behemoth, meaning the staff get wonderful creative freedom both in and, evidently, out of actual game development…







ALIEN NATION

1 JOHN BAEZ PRODUCER, THE BEHEMOTH

IN A NUTSHELL: Before setting up the Behemoth with Tom, Dan and Brandon, John worked at Gratuitous Games as an artist. Having focused on console conversions, a brief play of the original *Alien Hominid* Flash game was all it took for him to set his sights on a home version.

2 TOM FULP GAME DESIGNER, THE BEHEMOTH

IN A NUTSHELL: After working in web design for some time, setting up newgrounds.com and playing host to the *Hominid* Flash game long enough for it to to notch up over ten million downloads, Tom joined forces with the three other guys to co-found The Behemoth.

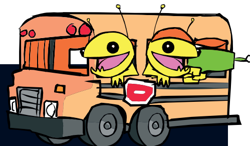
As The Behemoth's only game to date, it's only logical that we concentrate on the wonderful *Alien Hominid*, a retro-inspired shooter with glorious visuals that bring the genre bang up to date. As well as quality, the game gives off an air of freedom that many developers would kill for. "The great thing about self-funding your own game is that nobody can tell you 'no'," explains producer John Baez. "We could come up with things like the text-based adventure element – which never came to fruition but is a really great concept – just because we could. We alone are responsible for the ultimate content so we proof tested all these ideas; the ones that really didn't fit in that particular universe at that particular time we decided to leave behind." Designer Tom Fulp gives us more of an insight into just why *Hominid* feels the way it does. "The key to *Alien Hominid* is that you can play it and see that while it obviously didn't have the budget, you can feel the love. We were just kids who grew up loving videogames and I hope that's what comes across when people play it."

Considering how many times the side-scrolling shooter has been done, the guys seem to be hitting a whole new market as well as the retro-heads, as Baez explains. "When we've been at trade shows, we've had ten-year-old kids come up to us that have never played a side-scroller and they think we invented it. It's like 'No, we didn't invent any of this!' – they'd never even played a 2D game before." While it would be almost impossible to overlook those games from which *Alien Hominid* takes its cues, the team quotes a vast array of influential titles and companies. Treasure and *Gunstar Heroes* are the less surprising nods, but then the curveballs start being thrown. Y's *1+2* is the set-up before Fulp spikes home with his love of Namco's roll-'em-up, *Katamari Damacy*. "*Katamari Damacy* is a real inspiration in terms of how to break the mould and explore new territory," he says, with instant back-up from Baez. "It's so different that for us it's really inspirational to see that you can actually go through the normal channels to get published. It's

> **"2D GOT BLOWN AWAY BY THE EYE CANDY OF 3D. I HOPE WE CAN RE-ESTABLISH IT AS A VALID GENRE"**
> JOHN BAEZ, THE BEHEMOTH



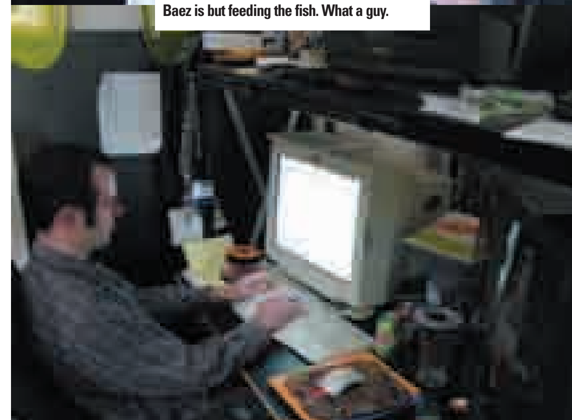
You can guarantee that The Behemoth's next title will be as much of a visual feast as *Alien Hominid*. These guys are all about the style.



A little bus. Awesome. As many times as we see this image, those massive grins never get any less amusing.



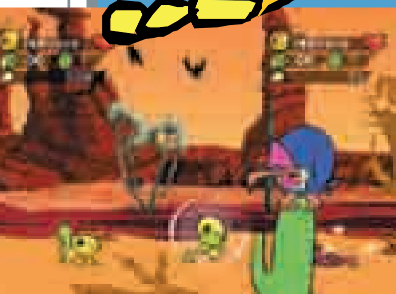
Fixing a complex computer issue? No, Mr Baez is but feeding the fish. What a guy.

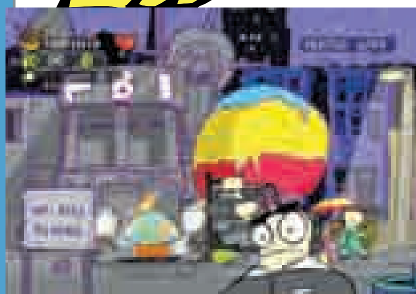


YOU CAN COME TOO, TOO, TOO

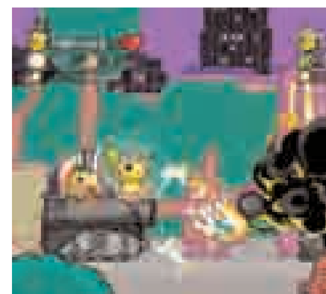
With several big-name publishers vying to add *Alien Hominid* to their arsenals, The Behemoth's decision to go with Zoo may seem odd. But so far, the partnership appears not only mutually agreeable but successful to boot. "We're really happy to have Zoo as our European publisher," says Tom Fulp, a sentiment echoed by John Baez: "We interviewed with maybe 23 publishers in the US and another 12 or so in Europe and they're all the same," he recalls. "Believe it or not, it's a really big deal for us. We could have gone with a big name but we went with the guys who were like us, who were excited." Fulp agrees: "There were plenty of cases where people in the companies would like the game but it never got high enough. It works its way up though people who love it until it gets to the one guy who says it wouldn't be profitable. As soon as it gets to the market research guy – the no TV/movie licence check box – that's when it's over." But with the game now in Zoo's custody, between the marketing push it's received and the great review scores, it's going to be hard to avoid the little yellow guy for a few months.

Ah, Hominid, how we love thee. You make yellow look so good we nearly forgot about that dreadful Coldplay song. Nearly…









> **"IF PEOPLE DON'T HUNT DOWN GREAT GAMES,** THE MARKET WILL CONTINUE TO **BE DOMINATED BY BAD MOVIE FRANCHISES"**
> TOM FULP, THE BEHEMOTH

fantastic to see something so off-the-wall – why can't there be more games like this? Why isn't there more risk-taking?" We don't know – well, we do but namedropping typically safe firms like EA won't do anyone any favours. Oops.

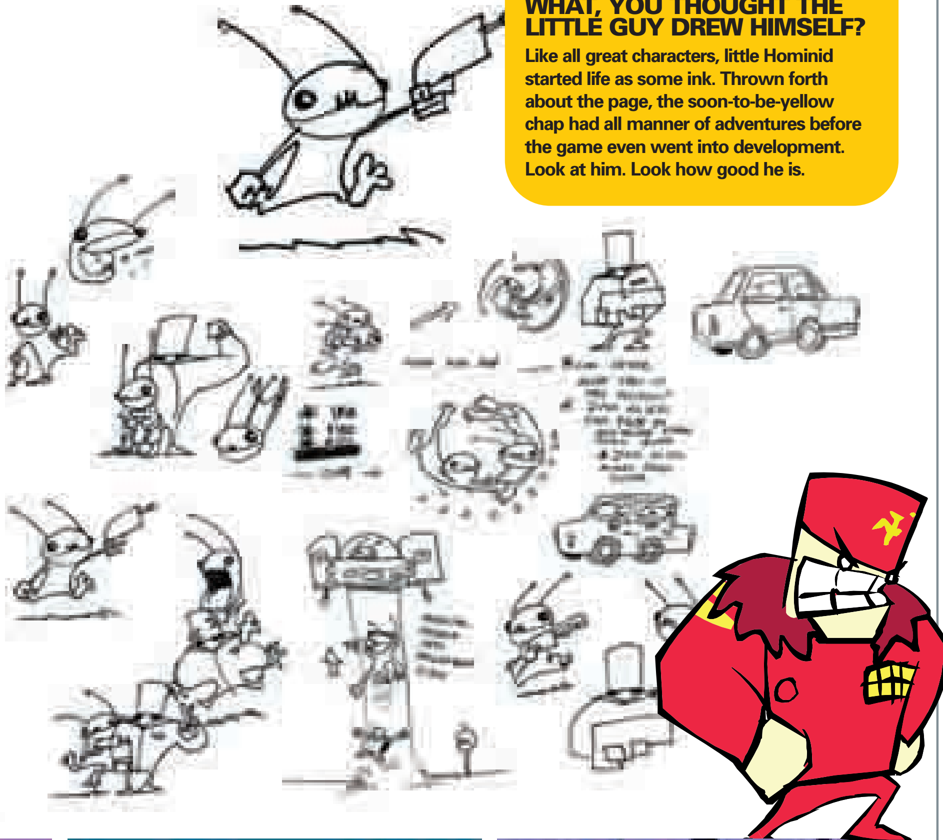
So in a polygon-filled world, what are the chances of us seeing The Behemoth bottle it and jump on the bandwagon? "I can see 3D games as something we could do but I also really see the viability of 2D games. I think they're just two different options that can both make for fun games," says Fulp. "So if we wanted to do a game that's like *Metal Slug* or *Gunstar Heroes*, you just gotta do it in 2D; people are still gonna enjoy it. It's a good niche for a small company to do and that's where we're at right now." A valid point that Baez follows with one of his own. "I think if you related it to something in the real world, 3D videogames are like sculpture and 2D games are like paintings – it'd be like saying that paintings aren't valid any more because we can sculpt," he muses. "It's totally not true. As long as you have the right artist doing the painting, it all works out." And in the case of *Alien Hominid*, we'd say kudos to The Behemoth for having such an artist on its payroll.

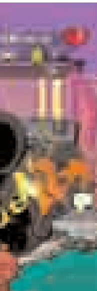
With *Hominid* out of the way in terms of development, The Behemoth has spent a lot of time raising awareness, with conventions, merchandising and so forth all helping to build a brand around the game. But, thankfully, Baez's posse don't have to work themselves into the ground. "I think the great thing about our current time in the history of videogames is the internet," says Baez. "Now, it's not up to just magazines, TV hype or how big your marketing budget is. People can share views on games over the internet and pretty quickly after a game launches, you really know if it's a dog or not." Fulp seems reliant on other factors. "It's kinda like music – I think there's always that niche of people that seek good music, and in the same way I'm sure there are people that seek out great games. I'd like to see a lot more of that." But what if that doesn't happen? "If people don't start to hunt down great videogames, the market will continue to be dominated by bad movie franchises and lacklustre sequels. So the more people that demand and seek out good games, the better it will be for future games and gamers," says Fulp. "You have companies that have billions of dollars – they'll spend that money on making good games if and when the market demands it. The consumer votes with their dollars."

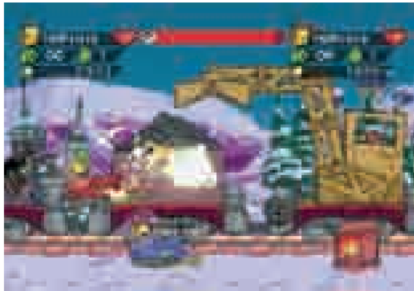
THE GALLERY

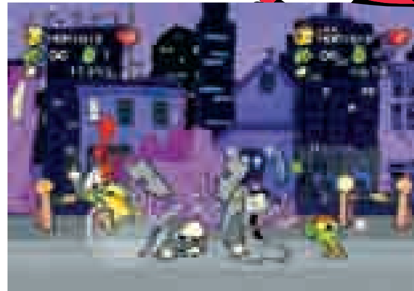
WHAT, YOU THOUGHT THE LITTLE GUY DREW HIMSELF?

Like all great characters, little Hominid started life as some ink. Thrown forth about the page, the soon-to-be-yellow chap had all manner of adventures before the game even went into development. Look at him. Look how good he is.



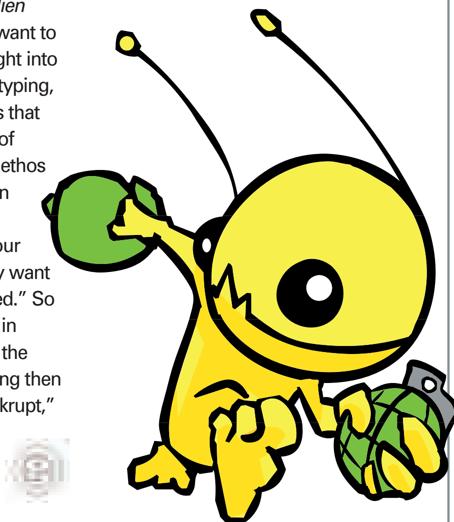






Not played *Alien Hominid* yet? What the hell are you waiting for? Christmas? Actually, that's not a bad idea – then you'll get it for free. No – buy it. You won't regret it.

So what do the guys see in their future? "Definitely going to make another game," cracks Baez, while Fulp is a little more serious. "We have plenty of ideas for a sequel. But even though we really are excited to make a follow-up to *Alien Hominid*, we've been holding a commitment that we want to make a different game in between, not just jump straight into it," he explains. "Right now, we're doing a lot of prototyping, playing with a lot of fun ideas. There are loads of ideas that could all be really awesome games – it's just a matter of deciding which one will be the next great game." The ethos is simple. "We're really big on multiplayer, really big on 2D, really big on 'weird' and 'different' – we wanna do something that when you play it, it'll just mess with your head and make you tell your friends about it. We really want the next game to shake people up and get them excited." So while details may be scarce, intentions are already set in stone. "Hopefully we can inspire more kids to get into the business. If we can inspire one game that I enjoy playing then we've won," Fulp concludes. "Even if we've gone bankrupt," adds Baez with a laugh. But after flying out of the gates with *Alien Hominid*, The Behemoth's days of financial insecurity look to be a thing of the past.



THREE STEPS TO SUCCESS

FLASH, BANG, BOOM

Hominid **started life as a Flash game that was downloaded by over ten million fans. "That was just word of mouth," Tom Fulp explains. "There was no advertising at all." But given its widespread availability, the actual figure for how many people have enjoyed the game may be substantially higher.**



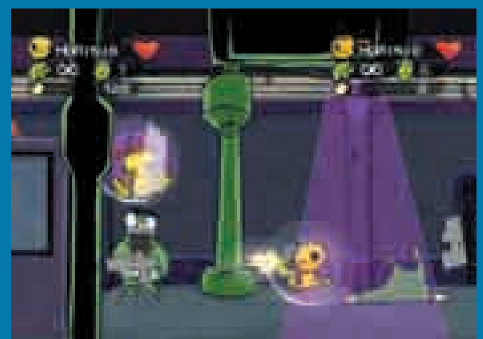
TOYS IN THE ATTIC

The team is very hands-on when it comes to promotional goodies, pressing badges themselves and lending a hand wherever necessary. "Doing it all yourself, you have this flexibility to get that kind of stuff manufactured," says John Baez. "The only reason we do it is that we like it too. It's cool."



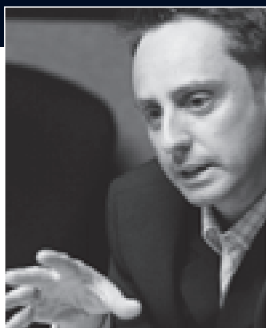
CONSOLE CRAZY

And so we come to the end of ***Hominid's*** **journey so far. With Xbox and PS2 versions available now (and a Cube version on import), pretty much anyone can enjoy the vibrant, frenetic shooting action. With three awards and a slew of great scores under their belts, John, Tom and the guys are in a great position for their next release. Whatever that may be…**



"HAS MARIO EVER BEEN TRADITIONAL? THE PHENOMENON OF MARIO IS THAT IT WORKS IN MANY DIFFERENT STYLES. I COULDN'T IMAGINE A LARA CROFT CAR GAME"

MARKO HEIN



The Players

AT E3, MUCH OF THE MYSTERY SURROUNDING THE NEXT-GEN CONSOLES WAS BRUSHED AWAY. NINTENDO, HOWEVER, IS STILL KEEPING FAIRLY QUIET. WE ASK MARKO HEIN ABOUT THE COMPANY'S PLANS…

MARKO HEIN

NINTENDO EUROPE

E3 is obviously a busy time for everyone in the gaming world, but it does present the opportunity to chat with some of those industry figures who are difficult enough to get on the phone, let alone engage in a proper sit-down conversation. However, with the Los Angeles-based gathering being the publicity-driven event it is, there's always an unsettling feeling that you're about to be bombarded with a flurry of industry speak and pre-planned answers, regardless of the content of your questions – an unnecessary fear in this case, as Marko Hein, head of product analysis and online at Nintendo Europe, turns out to be as down to earth as we could have hoped.

As nice as this is, it's surprising. The pressure on the company at the moment is huge, with both Sony and Microsoft's E3 displays revealing far more about their next-gen efforts than Nintendo, which seems to be far coyer with regard to the Revolution. "E3 is all about showing muscle," Hein tells us. "It's always been like this. I think, as a company, we deliberately don't talk about the specs as much, which I think makes sense in the end. You have to see the games, you have to touch the games and see what the graphics look like."

Of course, as far as the Revolution goes, specs and hardware were all that was on show at E3 with the main software focus being the new content for the GameCube. Surprising, perhaps, as Nintendo is well-known for selling its new consoles by presenting innovation and gameplay to the masses rather than relying on figures, stats and pretty looking machines – a tactic that Hein insists is the best way to do things…

"If you look at the current generation, the PlayStation2 has the lowest specs of all the consoles, what does it mean? Nothing. It's the best selling of them all. At the end of the day specs aren't everything. I work until eight o'clock then I go home and have spare time from eight 'til eleven. So what do I do with my spare time? There are a huge variety of things that you can do, so how can we convince people to play computer games? Make the graphics a bit better? That's not enough. We're trying to take things one step further to give people a reason to get back into games again."

He has a point – it's unlikely that a graphical boost alone will reel in a horde of new gamers, but one feature that has pulled many into the world of gaming over the last couple of years is the lure of playing online, an area where Nintendo has fallen way behind the pack, preferring to concentrate on connectivity. Everyone has an opinion on whether this was a smart move, but Hein's job title suggests that his opinion may be worth more than most. And for him, it's obvious why Nintendo has held back from broadband gaming.

"For a casual gamer or a little kid, the hurdle of online gaming is still a very high one," he explains. "You have to subscribe, you have monthly payments, it's technically quite complicated. With Nintendo we envisage online gaming without any fees, hassles or subscriptions. You should just be able to have online gaming: you check over the machine, you see a player, then you play. I think that it's at this level when online gaming really makes sense."

Whether this online experience is planned or not, the next year is going to be an interesting one for Nintendo. The success of the PSP in other territories has left many with doubts over Nintendo's place in the future of gaming, and fresh opinions are likely to be shaped by the performance of its rivals and on what the company chooses to reveal over the coming months, but which way does Hein see things going?

"I think the main thing that helps us is innovation and I hope that Nintendo will continue to provide good entertainment in the future," he says with a smile. "But I am concerned where the market is going. When you look at the industry right now the American market is stagnating and the only healthy market right now is Europe. I think we're looking for a new type of entertainment. *Electroplankton* is a very good example of trying out something new; we are looking for new and exciting entertainment possibilities and we hope to stay in the market for a very long time." We hope so too…



REVIEWS

THE AVERAGE

Despite representing an industry in which high scores mean everything, games™ is not a magazine that marks with the majority. A lot of people think that anything below 7 (7.0, 70%, whatever) is a bad score – we don't. Going on a scale of one to ten, five is the average – average being a game that does what it sets out to do without attempting to do it better than anyone else. If a game gets five you'll get some enjoyment out of it but nothing more, simple as that. What's more, we won't be swayed by PR people telling us what a game's like – we only decide once we've played each game to death and, in the majority of cases, to completion. If a game's bad we'll make sure you know, if it's great we'll sing its praises. At the end of the day, we're just here to help you decide what's worth your hard-earned cash. After all, if it wasn't for you, we'd be out of a job.



DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

OTHER FORMATS
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
UK

PUBLISHER
THQ

DEVELOPER
Pandemic

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
24 June

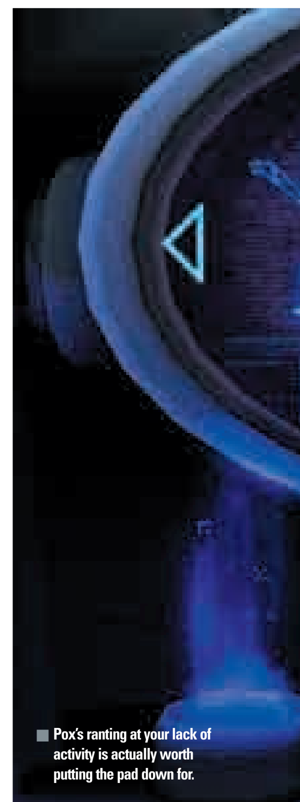
PLAYERS
1

DESTROY ALL HUMANS!

"HELLO – I AM A PERFECTLY NORMAL HUMAN WORM BABY"

Being good sucks. How many times have you had to rescue princesses, perform menial tasks for little or no reward, or be nice to an absolute cretin just because you're playing the good guy? The guy who probably wants to save the world, the guy who won't kill fallen rivals, the guy who really isn't any fun at all just because he's the good guy. Well, 'good guy' (if that's even your real name), your days are numbered. As well as offering us the ability to choose which path to walk in games like *Fable* and *Knights Of The Old Republic*, more and more developers are realising that being evil is far more liberating and entertaining than toeing the usual hero line. From the dastardly schemes of *Evil Genius* to stomping a spelunk of whores (yes, that is the collective noun for a group of prostitutes – deal with it) to death in the middle of the Las Venturas desert, unleashing your inner bastard is further removed from the humdrum, day-to-day lives of most ordinary people and is therefore more fun. And so, without further ado, we give you gaming's latest badass…

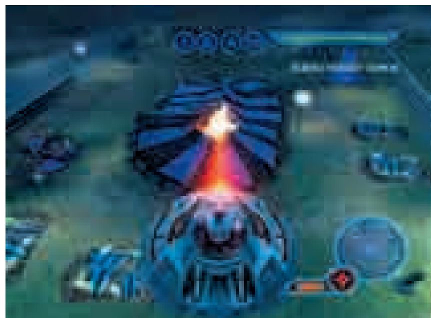
As Cryptosporidium-137, your task is as simple as the game's title makes it out to be – simply bring an end to the human race. Sounds easy, no? No. It sounds really quite tricky, actually. Crypto may just be a lone invader from beyond the stars but, luckily, he's loaded with toys with which to bring about this mass slaughter. While going in heavy-handed is always an option (and usually the preferred one), you can use that



Pox's ranting at your lack of activity is actually worth putting the pad down for.



Photography may be prohibited but feel free to blow the hell out of the place.



All the fun of the fair – you don't even have to pick the coconuts up.



Crypto looks about ready to make a moving speech about his fallen brother. He doesn't. Blowing everything up, it seems, is a far more noble pursuit.



FUSED

BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER

IF IT MOVES: Everything we like about today's best shooters summed up with one little grey alien.

GRAND THEFT CONCEPT: Levels have plenty of extra-curricular havoc to keep you amused.



"THE OUTSTANDING SCRIPT PARODIES ITS SUBJECT MATTER AS WELL AS YOU COULD HOPE, MEANING DESTROY ALL HUMANS! IS LAUGH-OUT-LOUD FUNNY"

massive cranium to help take on a disguise and sneak your way to an objective.

While you'll be dropped at the mission site at the beginning of each level and given a series of objectives to perform, you won't be snapped away from the fun as soon as the 'Mission Complete' message starts to fade away. After all your objectives have been cleared, you're allowed (nay, expected, in some cases) to hang around for a little more mayhem and exploration of the fairly large, open and free-roaming environments. In many cases, though, you'd probably be advised to get the hell off the Earth post haste – with the authorities breathing down your neck, it's only a matter of time before your grey ass ends up on an autopsy table. Still, stick around and there are all manner of mini-missions to keep you out of trouble and stocked up on precious DNA, the game's currency used to upgrade items and abilities and access new missions.

To keep you on your toes (if that's what Crypto even has), there are four flavours of alert status – you'll rise from general civilian awareness through local police and military involvement as you wreak more and more havoc, culminating in the arrival of a crack anti-alien organisation, Majestic, which is more than happy to use your own technology against you. The whole thing is clearly modelled on *GTA*'s 'Wanted' stars system and works well for it – evade the local constabulary for long enough and they'll lose interest, while certain missions will be failed immediately should the powers that be discover you.

But when things get too hairy, there's always the option to return to the mothership and regain composure (either with a little relaxation or, more likely, a rampage through one of the early levels). This can make matters a little easy at times. but to counter-balance this the missions themselves do get somewhat tricky and lengthy. These showcase some great ideas across a good spread of themes – protect a location, imitate an important figure or generally go bonkers and ruin an entire town.

Even the game's unique style commands respect. Everything from content to loading screens is perfectly in keeping with the Fifties B-movie feel and Pandemic has even gone so far as to license a sizeable chunk of *Plan 9 From Outer Space* to be playing at the game's drive-ins. But it's in mixing old with new that *Destroy All Humans!* enjoys its greatest success. The outstanding script parodies its subject matter as well as you could ever hope, and with sterling voice-over work from the likes of Dwight Schultz and Richard Horvitz (voice of Zim in *Invader Zim*, one of the most original and criminally underrated animated series in years), *Destroy All Humans!* deservedly joins the elite of laugh-out-loud funny games.

And it's not only the dialogue that amuses – the same sick pleasures that *Psi-Ops* offered are continued and expanded here. While simply electrocuting an 'enemy' to death will usually suffice, the player is rewarded – be it physically, mentally or both – for being that much more, well, brutal. Sneaking in and overloading the brain of a live subject produces a greater yield of DNA while ▷

INVADER WHO?

Even after extended exposure to *Destroy All Humans!*, it still amazes us just how much it has in common with Jhonen Vasquez's outstanding cartoon *Invader Zim*. From concept to attitude, the two have a staggering amount in common, topped off by show star Richard Horvitz's perfect casting as Pox, Crypto's maniacally enthusiastic boss. Whether intentionally or otherwise, Pandemic has delivered the closest thing we'll ever see to an *Invader Zim* game – the only thing it's really missing is Gir dancing like a monkey. Which everyone needs to see. Still, the ability to hypnotise cows and make them dance will do for now…









simply tossing an exploding radioactive zombie cow (no, we didn't make that up – yes, we wish we had) into a police car is far more rewarding than simply gunning the cops to bits.

It's absolutely criminal that when games like this and *Psi-Ops* can create such empowering and believable telekinetic abilities, not a single *Star Wars* title has yet joined their ranks. Still, Force or no, Crypto's mind powers – of which there are a decent spread – will come in more useful than your weapons for much of the game. Disguising yourself as disgusting Earthlings, lobbing cows into rivers, reading brain patterns, hypnotising hapless fools… Pandemic has made sure that even being massively outnumbered won't stall the single-alien invasion for long, but if your own superior cranial power just isn't enough, the hardware is there to back you up as well. From the simple Zap-O-Matic to ridiculously devastating Ion Detonators and the wonderfully sadistic Anal Probe, the combo of brain power and firepower is every bit as strong here as in Midway's sublime adventure of last year. Which, as those who played *Psi-Ops* will tell you, is really quite strong.

But Crypto's heavy-handed invasion isn't limited to ground assaults. By leaping into his saucer the little grey chap can unleash all manner of death from above – the house favourite remains using the Abducto Beam to pick up and

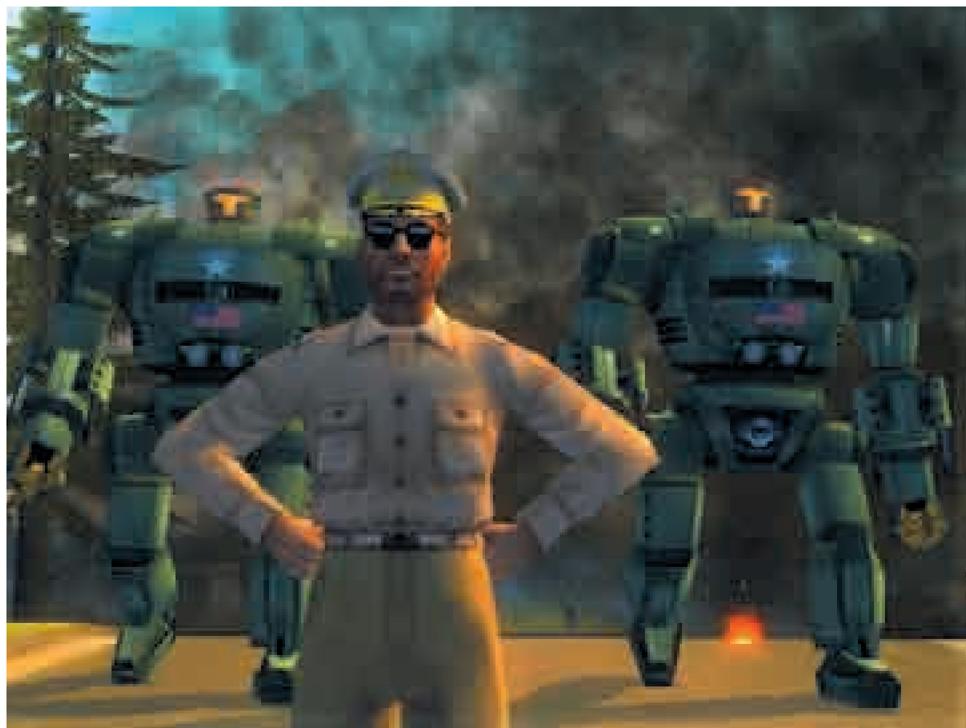
FAQs

Q. DESTROY ALL HUMANS! IS AWESOME, RIGHT?
Yes, way awesome. You get to blow up all the things.

Q. IS IT ANYTHING LIKE THAT STING SONG?
Which one? Sting sings all the notes and has all the tunes. You need to be more specific.

Q. THE 'LEGAL ALIEN' ONE. WHAT'S IT CALLED?
Englishman In New York. And no, it isn't anything like it. That'd just be silly.

"PANDEMIC'S EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL EFFORT IS A LITTLE ON THE SIMPLE SIDE, BUT IN TERMS OF SHEER PLAYABILITY, SCALE AND FREEDOM DESTROY ALL HUMANS! IS A CLASS ACT"

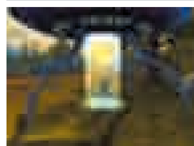


The guy shouldn't be difficult to take down but those robot things could prove annoying. Your rasping insults and distaste for humanity won't save you here, Crypto.

24:00 TIMELINE HIGHLIGHTS

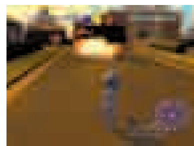
THE BEST BITS IN THE GAME AND WHEN YOU CAN EXPECT TO SEE THEM

2 MINUTES



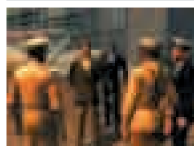
After listening to what Pox has to say (or skipping it if you're feeling adventurous) it's time to beam down to Earth for the first time. Show those cows who's boss…

2 HOURS



New weapons and powers should be helping you lay waste to even bigger threats. You've either conquered several missions or got sidetracked. Making cows dance is funny.

2 DAYS



As the plot unfolds you'll be even more eager to obliterate the human race. There doesn't seem to be an end to the amount of missions on offer. Dancing cows still funny.



If you're in a fix, taking to the skies is often the best way to avoid the authorities.



throw military vehicles, although levelling an entire neighbourhood with the Sonic Boom also deserves a mention. Suffice to say that this isn't exactly the subtlest way to conduct business, and taking to the skies in your spinny doom machine will immediately see the authorities quite literally rolling out the big guns.

Destroy All Humans! has been more or less stalked by the **games™** team since its announcement. After having improved considerably at each preview stage, it's a joy to see the finished product is all we had hoped it would be. With an infinite supply of lives (Crypto's clones take his place upon death, the numerical suffix rising by one to show how proficient/useless an invader you are) and an easy escape just a pause menu away, it could be argued that Pandemic's extra-terrestrial effort is a little on the simple side, but in terms of sheer playability, scale and freedom – albeit within fairly limited areas – *Destroy All Humans!* is a class act indeed and serves as further testament to Pandemic's ability. The Tallest will be most pleased.



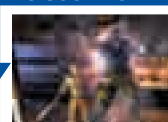
VERDICT 8/10
A SUBLIME SLICE OF SCI-FI SILLINESS

RATCHET & CLANK 3



BETTER THAN

AS GOOD AS



PSI-OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY

games™

FINGERPRINT
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

MIND BULLETS: Throw enemies around like dirty toys using only the power of your gigantic brain.
FUNNY FUNNY?: Gratuitous violence and well-written humour? Truly we are spoiled.

"HAVE YOU THE BRAIN WORMS?"

Those of a squeamish nature might do well to avoid *Destroy All Humans!*. While it might be all very tongue-in-cheek, using psychokinesis to blow out a person's brain before harvesting the grey matter is far from friendly. As is equipping the Anal Probe and terrorising entire communities with rectal breaches so powerful that, again, skulls burst and brains part company with bodies. Then there's vaporising cows to leave only a bovine skeleton, dropping trucks on crowds of innocent morons, levelling entire farming communities with your UFO's Death Ray and much, much more horrible carnage besides…



If only there was a way of capturing the explosive delights of the Ion Detonator in a still image. But there isn't. Never mind, looks pretty, right?





DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
PC

ORIGIN
Ukraine

PUBLISHER
Atari

DEVELOPER
Deep Shadows

PRICE
£34.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1

MINIMUM SPEC
Pentium PIII 800MHz/ AMD Athlon processor, Nvidia GeForce/ATI Radeon 7000 video card, 256Mb RAM

BOILING POINT: ROAD TO HELL

DOES ATARI HAVE A SLEEPER HIT ON ITS HANDS?

According to poet and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'We all boil at different degrees'. Following the disappearance of his daughter while she investigated the activities of a South American warlord-cum-drug baron, it's fair to say that Saul Meyer has reached his own boiling point. Played by *Mummy* star Arnold Vosloo (who lends not only his voice but also his physical likeness to the character), Meyer heads to Realia – the fictional country where the game is set – and tries to find out where his daughter is and who has got her.

One of the most striking things about *Boiling Point* is the personalisation of the plot. Rather than being the kind of 'one man against the world' schtick that publishers are so quick to churn out these days, the simple yet engrossing story in *Boiling Point* immediately piques your interest – and when the game starts in earnest after the brief introduction it becomes nigh-on impossible not to get drawn into the game world entirely. To say that this is a thinking man's *San Andreas* is to over-simplify things, but it's not a million miles away from the truth. *Boiling Point* is not a shooter. Nor is it a driving game. Nor is it an RPG. In fact, we're not even sure what it is. It's more of an experience than a game. Imagine *Deus Ex* meets *San Andreas* in a South American setting; that's about as close as we can get.

The game's central thread is the search for Meyer's daughter, and by talking to those involved with her the player will begin to piece together clues about what might have happened. That's right, clues. This is a game that's as much about detective work as it is about aggression.

ROLE-PLAYING GAME

Like *Deus Ex* before it, *Boiling Point* is unafraid to mix genres and introduces strong role-playing elements to the table. Meyer can improve his accuracy with all weapons by using them frequently, as well as building up his physique; he may also become addicted to the drugs that the mafia are growing and selling, as well as regular medication that he uses to recover from injury. Spend too long in the bar drinking and looking for clues, and the poor guy might even become an alcoholic. Weapons can be upgraded with the help of an expert from a friendly faction, while Meyer can trade in his daughter's old banger for a faster, more robust vehicle. Hell, Meyer will even benefit from a good night's sleep if he gets too tired.



Inventory management is important if Meyer is to succeed.



Meyer can learn to use more than one handgun at once. Useful.

games™

FUSED

BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER

ROLE PLAYING: Meyer can improve aspects of his character as the game progresses.

DETECTIVE AGENCY: Asking questions gets our hero closer to his daughter than crazed violence.

FAQs

Q. SO THIS ISN'T A FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER?
No way, José. 'Ask first, shoot later' is the way forward here.

Q. IS THE ACTING ANY GOOD?
Meyer is superb, one of the best acted in any game. The other characters are above par too.

Q. WHO DID KIDNAP HIS DAUGHTER, THEN?
Seeing as how that's the game's only set objective, you'll just have to find out for yourself.

Panic not, though, because aggression plays its part too. In order to pursue the threads of this central plot, Meyer needs money. Invariably this is to bribe informants, but it can also be spent on serious weaponry, a better car and many other things besides. It's in how he earns his money that the game takes a step into true open-ended genius.

There are a number of factions in Realia. The government is battling against guerrillas, and the mafia, while the CIA would be grateful for any information on the disparate groups in this powder keg of a country. Meyer can throw his lot in with any of them, undertaking missions to earn extra cash that he can use to pursue his quest. Run an errand for the mafia against the army, and the army will be after you; screw things up for the mafia and they won't be too happy either. Every action has a reaction, every decision has ramifications, and it feels like nothing you've ever played before. In short, the game has one objective: find Meyer's daughter. What happens between starting and ending is entirely up to you – and no two games will ever be quite the same.

Despite the entirely believable alternative reality created by the game (in which you'll lose yourself for days), it's still a little short of perfection. Although *Boiling Point* represents a huge step forward for PC games, it still suffers from annoying inconsistencies that, while nowhere near serious enough to drag the game into the realms of 'average', do threaten to shatter the illusion of realism – which is what the game is hanging its hat upon. For instance, it's a little too easy to befriend the different factions, who will welcome you back with open arms even if, on your last visit, you were on a murderous killing spree. Furthermore, if anything is done to antagonise a faction, everyone knows about it instantly; there's no room to creep around here. Early on in the game, sneakily picking up a laptop containing compromising information will result in an entire faction chasing the player down with all guns blazing, even if no-one saw the light-fingered removal. Pah.

However, there's much to admire about this remarkable game. Such ambition hasn't been seen on the PC in God knows how long and Atari has landed itself an absolute classic here. A must-have – no questions asked.



Talking to characters who knew Meyer's daughter will yield clues about her disappearance.

FARCRY

BETTER THAN

AS GOOD AS

DEUS EX

VERDICT 9/10

A TRIUMPH THAT NO PC GAMER SHOULD MISS

MARIO PARTY ADVANCE

YOU KEPT THE RECEIPT FOR MARIO'S PRESENT, RIGHT?

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
Game Boy Advance

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Nintendo

DEVELOPER
Hudson

PRICE
£29.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-2

Well, this is an oddity. While we're big fans of the usual *Mario Party* fare – huddle round a GameCube and play some silly mini-games in a primarily-luck-based-but-enjoyable board game – Nintendo has made a massive error of judgment in bringing the series to the Game Boy Advance. Funny – that isn't like Nintendo…

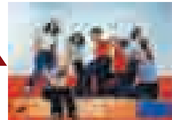
But the error doesn't lie in merely shrinking down the multiplayer frivolity. A trip to Shroom City feels almost familiar – the board, dice blocks and mini-games are all in place in typical *Mario Party* fashion, albeit now with added chores, no opponents and a lot of silly mini-games that often don't work. But the fact that there are no multiplayer party options remains a massive mistake-shaped curveball. With daft mini-games and Gaddgets designed for four players to huddle around a single GBA, it's stupidity of the highest order that Nintendo should invent the 'one-man party'.

So with single-player action grounded in retardedly simple puzzles and chronically dull delivery, a lot relies on the strength of the mini-games. Unfortunately, despite a few exceptions, many of them are merely distracting at best, and with a maximum of two players the potential for competitiveness is minimal. In addition, a number of the single-player games are things like fruit machines or roulette – more luck-based fun vacuums than enjoyable challenges.

The Gaddgets provide the game's most interesting elements – the collection of strange devices, tiny mini-games and multiplayer 'experiments' range from the useless to actually quite entertaining. Passing the GBA around with the bomb defusal game (digital Pop-Up Pirate, if you will) accounts for much of our time at Mario's frankly stagnant shindig, and when something so simple is the star attraction you know the package is lacking.

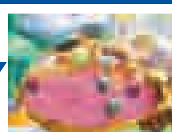
It's hard to see exactly who Nintendo thinks *Mario Party Advance* will appeal to. Fans of the franchise tend to enjoy the multiplayer board game aspect – they'll hate this. *WarioWare* fans are used to a wide and quirky spread of games – they'll hate this. Newcomers will see the board-based single-player slog as nothing but hard work – they'll hate this. And as for people who hate wasting £30… well, we'll leave that for you to figure out.

AN S CLUB PARTY



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



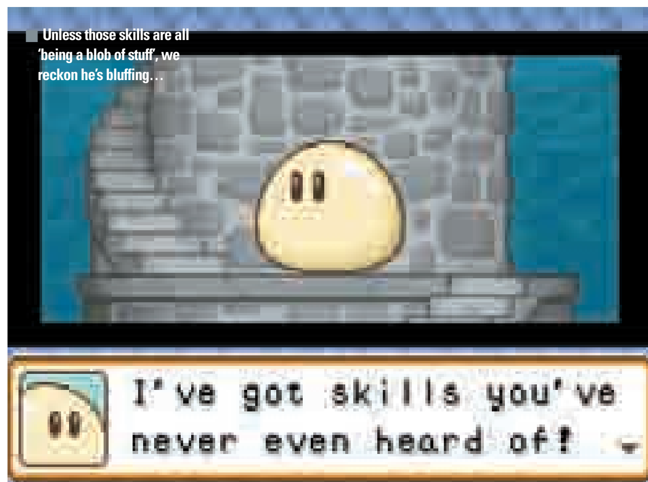
MARIO PARTY 5



Press A to laugh. Twice. Then you win. This game is no fun either.

games™ FINGERPRINT
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE
ON YOUR OWN: Want to party with your mates? Tough. Only the mini-games are playable in multiplayer, making you wonder why it's even called "Party" at all.

VERDICT 3/10
SERIOUSLY, BURN YOUR INVITE



Unless those skills are all 'being a blob of stuff', we reckon he's bluffing…




eMag





DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

OTHER FORMATS
PlayStation2, PC

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Majesco

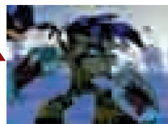
DEVELOPER
Double Fine

PRICE
$49.99

RELEASE
TBA '05 (US: Out Now)

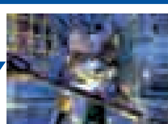
PLAYERS
1

VEXX



BETTER THAN

AS GOOD AS



STARFOX ADVENTURES

PSYCHONAUTS

INSANE IN THE MEMBRANE

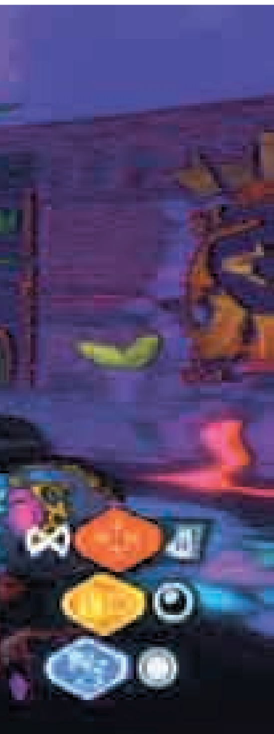
Some games (or even consoles, in the case of the DS) are prime targets for the gaming nay-sayer – those people determined to criticise something without giving it a chance to prove itself. With that in mind, then, we should confirm something right away; you're wrong about *Psychonauts*. It's not 'for kids' despite the simplistic looking visuals, nor is it 'just another *Vexx*' because it is, at its core, a platform-based collect-'em-up. It's not 'visually unimpressive' by any stretch of the imagination, although you wouldn't know that if you haven't played past the tutorial level. And if you even suggest that 'it's not funny'… well, we won't be held responsible for our actions.

To appreciate *Psychonauts* for what it is takes the kind of gamer who's willing to see past a few lazily concocted impressions and put time into a game that doesn't spill all its rewards at once – a dying breed, by all accounts. Yes, so perhaps *Psychonauts* doesn't quite live up to all our expectations but, to be fair, they were incredibly high given that it had Tim '*Grim Fandango*/*Full Throttle*/*Day Of The Tentacle*' Schafer's name attached to it. That said, the game is far more than the sum of its parts – everything about it melds together to create an experience that, despite a few rather obvious flaws, is as rewarding and amusing as it is creative in its visual flair.

And it is creative, despite what you may gather from the summer-camp setting that forms the game's opening gambit. *Psychonauts* is a slow-burner, given that it takes around an hour to get young hero Razputin – Raz to his friends – from the training sections to the real meat that picks up from level three onwards. Nevertheless, each new stage demonstrates just how inventive a game can be when the developer is given the right canvas, which, in *Psychonauts*' case, boils down to Double Fine having the freedom to do whatever it could imagine. Every aspect of the human psyche has been recreated as a tangible, interactive area – paranoia is a 'quiet' all-American neighbourhood filled with faceless spies; lovelorn betrayal becomes a maze of gaudy Spanish alleys terrorised by a giant pink bull; repressed memories materialise as a secret room complete with screaming souls, hidden deep inside a neon-lit disco. It's a nice touch that

■ Censors are your biggest enemy and come in a variety of sizes, each more dangerous and annoying than the last.





FINGERPRINT

games™

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

TWISTED SISTER: The humour is subtle and bizarre, with plenty of Schafer's trademark style.

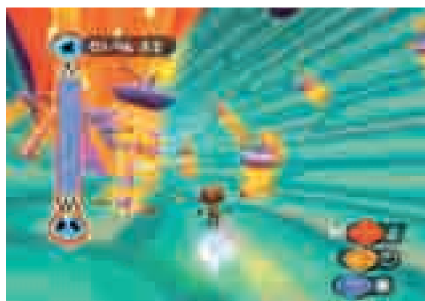
VISUAL FLAIR: There's a lot of variety in the look of each level, and the overall visual style is unique.

PASS THE COLLECTION PLATE

Although much of *Psychonauts* can be seen without indulging in the game's obsession with collecting, the only way to move Raz through the ranks and improve your psychic skills is to go item hunting. To say there's plenty to collect is an understatement; from Mental Arrowheads (*Psychonauts'* currency), PSI-Cards and scavenger-hunt items to Memory Vaults, Mental Cobwebs and your friends' brains, it'll take a while to grab everything. Figments Of The Imagination are the hardest to find simply because of their disposition: they fade in and out, often blend into the background because of their colour, occasionally move around and are invisible from the side due to being two-dimensional. Bah.







Clearly, melding the minds of an acrobat's son and a butcher's boy isn't wise, unless you fancy a trip to the Meat Circus.

Many of *Psychonauts'* levels are huge, but you can use these little yellow monsters to teleport to places you've already visited.

gives the game an extra layer of character, especially since this creativity spills over into the items you can collect – never has the term 'emotional baggage' been taken so literally.

That's not to say that *Psychonauts* is this ingenious all the way through, of course. Underneath the clever visual cues and story that has much of the trademark humour and plot twists you'd associate with Schafer's work, there's a platform game trying to get out… or rather, trying to remain hidden. That the title's style goes a long way to masking the simplistic nature is a huge plus, simply because it prevents the game from getting too dull. Even so, *Psychonauts* does at least make the effort to try to introduce different game elements into the mix – whether it be a variety of puzzles that, though not overly taxing, do at least give you something else to think about, a race against your fellow camp-mates or the selection of boss battles on offer, it's not all jumping across platforms, swinging on trapezes and walking tightropes. Mostly, yes, but not all.

But even so, that's not something that's detrimental to the overall quality of *Psychonauts* thanks, yet again, to the creativity of the game's level design. Raz's many psychic talents allow the game to be fairly inventive with each stage – one focused on use of the Levitation skill, another that sees you moving pieces across a giant game board with your Telekinesis and so on. Admittedly, some don't work quite as well as others (the giant Godzilla-style stage is rather linear, while another requiring you to direct a badly acted play doesn't pick up until halfway through) but it's not enough to stop the overall package being strangely satisfying.

The clash of style and content might make the game appear slightly schizophrenic, certainly – the mature and twisted style of humour not being something you'd normally associate with the platform adventure genre – but the fact is, *Psychonauts* works. It's not revolutionary by any means, nor is it particularly long, but thanks to some clever creative control the game delivers a funny, engrossing and downright weird experience unlike most other platform adventures. A game hasn't made us laugh out loud for a long time; so long, in fact, we'd forgotten what it felt like. Thanks, Double Fine.

FAQs

Q. HOW FUNNY?
Not as laugh out loud funny as *Grim Fandango*, which is a shame, but it's still got plenty of moments.

Q. PLATFORM OR PUZZLER?
Much of the gameplay is platform based, but working out which way to go isn't always easy and there are plenty of puzzles (albeit quite simple ones).

Q. REPLAY VALUE?
It's all about collecting; finding all the Figments can be tricky, so that'll add length to your game time.

VERDICT 7/10

A BREATH OF FRESH AIR FOR THE PLATFORM GENRE

THE CONSOLE FAVOURITE RETURNS FROM PC MILITARY COLLEGE

MEDAL OF HONOR: EUROPEAN ASSAULT

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

OTHER FORMATS
PS2, GameCube

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Electronic Arts

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
17 June

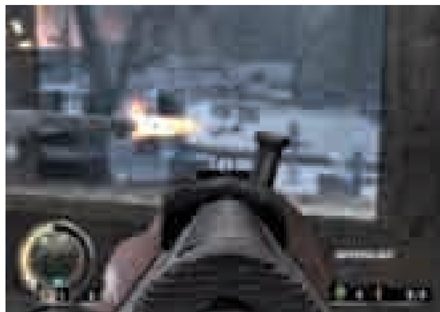
PLAYERS
1-4

The virtual battlefield is scattered planet-wide, populated by armies of PCs backed up predominantly by men in the 20- to 40-year-old bracket. They are laying siege to each other's cities and napalming villages and it won't be long before some shady internet business enables them to take each other's women by Fed Ex and hear their lamentation. Indeed, the PC war zone is quick to spread and adapt, not least because of patches and modders who constantly feed back to the publishers who, in turn, keep the frontlines fresh with the latest weapons.

The console war, on the other hand, is so dull that we really have to stop this droning combat analogy and think of any real highlights. *Star Wars Battlefield* was slightly more show than tell, *Band Of Brothers* too rigid; *Call Of Duty* had good intentions but despite a credible nod toward authenticity it did give the (very) slight impression that the fight was continuing under the oceans of Naboo. Console owners get the piece of paper in Lloyd George's hand that was *Medal Of Honor: Rising Sun*, the PC steals PSone *Medal Of Honor* and rebuilds it from the ground up to something far beyond its original form. *European Assault* is the bastard son of this process, playing swiftly, like a console FPS should, while including a far more intuitive control system that makes finding cover in a virtual battlefield and squeezing off a few rounds swift and rewarding.

It's a PC game with concessions to a console audience that go further than simply making the game work on a pad. They go as far as enabling you to collect points earned for headshots and converting them into Adrenaline. This accumulates and can be activated at any point to slow time down, become invulnerable and fire infinite rounds for a short period. This is nonsense, and even though it's often useful, it's nonsense. Similarly, the restart credits you earn for completing objectives make dying without ammunition a major problem since you'll spawn back to the same point with no ammunition, and near the German that just killed you.

The script was written by John Milius, a man who you could imagine arguing how Reagan was right in what he said about Rambo, also a man who made a film where a Hollywood brat pack fought against the Soviet invasion of the US. You'd expect him to provide something meaty, but nope. It's doubtful that he was responsible for the insertion of "nemesis" German high rankers



Pah! Cowardly Germans hiding behind gravestones. No respect, those Jerries…



For the purposes of providing a change of terrain, parts of Africa are now European…





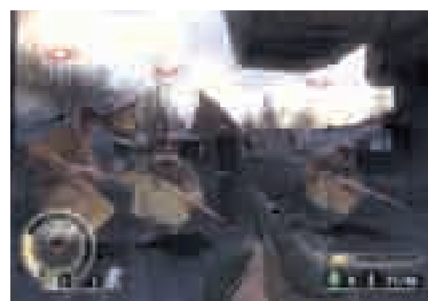
ENHANCED

IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

VIRTUAL BATTLEFIED: Missions are now played out in open areas fought over by AI.

LICK-A-SHOT: You can now aim directly down the barrel, increasing accuracy hugely.

'Pink sky at night, Rommel's delight', as British troops almost never used to say.



AMERI-HI-CAH – WE STAND AS ONE!

Up to three Russian partisans, Desert Rats or even fellow American GIs act as your AI squad who can be ordered by placing a marker within close range or bringing them back to your side. They're not as skilled as the men in *Band Of Brothers* and their use is limited, but their survival will award health for the next mission as well as lend a light tactical edge to your one-man mission. Their basic level of ability is just another console concession, but their inclusion is welcome and adds greatly to the atmosphere.

who exhibit their importance by being the only participants shadowed by energy shields in the shape of a bloodied iron cross – another console concession. He did, however, provide a plot in the form of a point A-to-B search for a secret weapons project; the script makes *The Dirty Dozen* sound like Laurence Olivier's voice-over for WWII documentaries. "Kill the Germans!", for example, is fruity and insightful by *European Assault*'s standards.

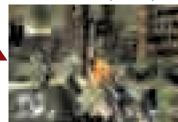
The missions across France, Belgium, Russia and the presumably not-European North Africa take place over open environments that you explore because you choose to rather than because you have to follow a compass pointing to your goals. There are familiar corridor-intensive sections to keep *Doom* honoured, there are also sections staged in open battlefields where almost every corner looks like it's mirroring the set for a war movie, despite the choice of filtration effect which, when not properly lit, makes dim areas look poorly exposed and lifeless. But it's the enemy that makes the game. This artificially intelligent army looks like it knows what it's doing, and what it's doing is fighting the equally numerous allied AI units with as much urgency as it bombards you. And that's a considerable amount if you accept that Normal mode is an EA measurement and that it gave the world *FIFA Street*. Play on Veteran and keep down or die quickly.

Electronic Arts' decision to free the series from simply being one man on a very direct mission by creating a virtual battlefield is a wise one but one that hasn't quite reached as far as it could. *European Assault* has plenty of atmospheric action when you're at the frontlines, but wander where you shouldn't and it could be Armistice Day for all the war you'll find. When it's at its best, it's up there with the best; but when it's at its worst you're caught in a death loop – and that's just shouldn't happen in the 21st Century. *European Assault* is a sporadically excellent defensive shooter that's let down by curious design philosophies and a musical score so rousing it could raise John Wayne's corpse.

VERDICT 7/10

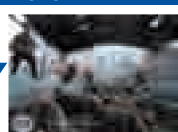
THE SINS OF RISING SUN ARE FINALLY LAID TO REST

CALL OF DUTY (XBOX)



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



CALL OF DUTY (PC)

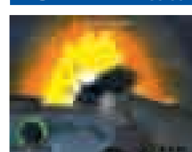
FAQs

Q. GRENADES. EXPLAIN.
Yes, you can now kick back grenades and your men know how to use them too.

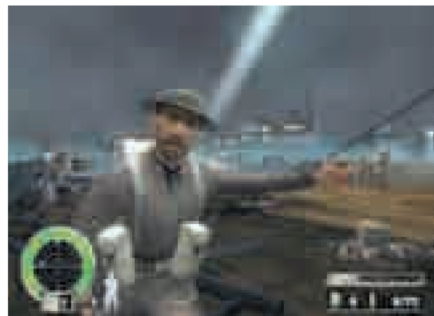
Q. ADRENALINE MODE SOUNDS AWFUL.
It allows you to punch out a trench full of Germans and so it has its uses.

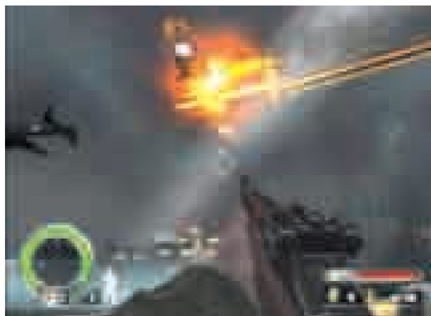
Q. IS THERE FRIENDLY FIRE?
No, the *Medal Of Honor* society forbids it, and you can walk through allied soldiers.

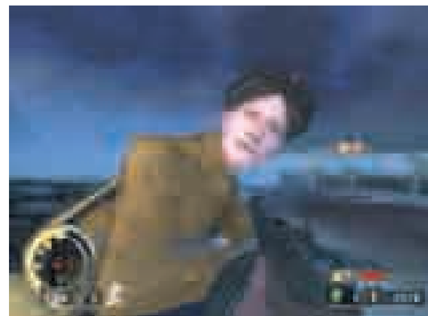
PS2 **£39.99**



Suffers from an erratic frame-rate but still plays well when the CPU doesn't get too worried. Ironically, the lesser PS2 version seems like it's giving you more bang for your buck that the Xbox. Blame *Ghost Recon 2*.









A Challenge mode has been included in case you want to give tournament racing a rest.



Choose your car then modify its attributes as you would a Dwarf or Night Elf or something.

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

OTHER FORMATS
PlayStation2, PC

ORIGIN
Italy

PUBLISHER
Lago

DEVELOPER
Milestone

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-2

WORLD RACING



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN

FORZA MOTORSPORT

MILESTONE REALLY MIXES IT UP

SQUADRA CORSE ALPHA ROMEO

Levelling up a driver rather than a vehicle in a racing game is an interesting idea – one that's been touched upon in titles like *Forza Motorsport*, in fact – but Milestone has taken it all the way. The developer has created such a mix of driving and levelling up that there was no choice but to call it a CarPG – a term we'd wager has been sitting in someone's brain for a long time while they waited for the right game.

The thing that immediately draws your attention when *SCAR* is booted up is not the RPG side of things, it's your Tiger ability. A skill for which tigers are not renowned, it allows you to rewind time – useful should you want to retake a corner or section of track that you feel you could have handled better. It sounds silly, and we suppose it is really, but at least it works well when used properly and, as the game progresses, it becomes a feature that you'll rely upon frequently.

Unfortunately, many of the additions to the classic racing formula are more irritating than innovative. The worst of these is your vehicle's 'health'. Damage is something you have to look out for in most racing titles, but *SCAR* is one of the most brutal examples we've ever seen. You start with 100 points, which will trickle away with every scrape of the paintwork. A high-speed collision will rob you of around 35 points and even driving on grass or gravel will drain them at an alarming rate. Sure, this limits short-cutting and rewards careful, competitive driving, but a nine-lap race becomes frustrating when you're destroyed on lap eight through no fault of your own. Although you can level up attributes, it's a while before you can make them beefy enough to be much use.

Of course, some elements work well and we can see how the idea may progress. However, as a straight racer, this can't compete with the flurry of recent quality titles, and the simple RPG elements aren't enough to carry the game down any other path. These shortfalls leave *SCAR* looking and feeling decidedly average.



games™ FINGERPRINT
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE
POWER UP: You can get hold of racing gloves that provide +1 grip. Nice one.
LEVEL UP: Improve stats and earn experience by performing well, much like in any RPG.

VERDICT 5/10
A GOOD IDEA, JUST A LITTLE TOO FLAWED



This is the Tiger ability in action, the sepia effect clearly, um, showing the reversal of time.


eMag

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
PSP

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Activision

DEVELOPER
Shaba Games

PRICE
$39.99

RELEASE
September '05

PLAYERS
1 (2-4 via Wi-Fi)

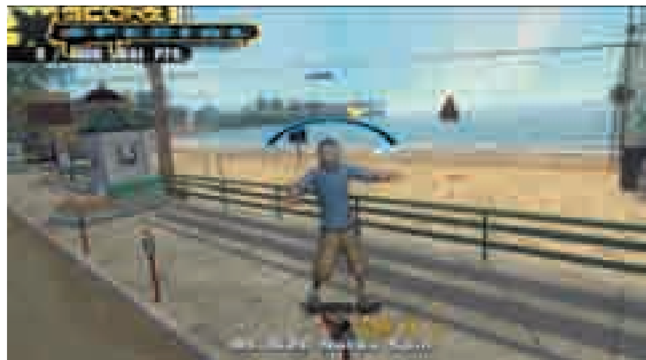
TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2 REMIX

NEED A SURE-FIRE WAY TO SEE OFF YOUR SQUARE BUTTON?

It's alright for some. Six years after his 'retirement' from competition, Mr Hawk is still bringing in the pennies thanks to his virtual counterpart being one of the most prolific game stars in recent memory. The game-a-year trend has been bucked at last but perhaps not in the way many envisioned. No, 2005 looks set to be the year of the double-Hawk combo as newcomer *American Wasteland* is joined by an update of last year's *World Destruction Tour.*

You know the drill by now – Neversoft has taken what is rapidly becoming the least extreme of extreme sports and made sure that just about anyone can bust moves that even the pros can only dream of. As well as the existing selection of sprawling environments just waiting to be torn up, PSP owners have been given four new locations to smash/skate as they see fit. Kyoto, Atlanta, Santa Cruz and Las Vegas are all worked into the game's main modes really well rather than being tacked on and are, for the most part, as good as the existing stages.

But as much as we love Bam and his HIM fixation, the gutter trash humour still makes us want to cry. The whole *Underground* approach is one that has divided Tony's disciples, and although the skating action is better than ever the game's attitude can still be a turn-off. Somewhat less offensive is just how well Shaba has captured the feel of the console versions – from soundtrack to visuals there's only a hint of compromise, and thanks to the USB port even the face mapping option arrives on the PSP intact. Only a little

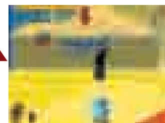


screen blurring – which seems to be afflicting a worrying amount of PSP software – really rains on Tony's parade on a technical level.

But above all, *Remix* suffers from many of the issues that ail all but the PS2 versions of the *Tony Hawk's* games – there just aren't enough buttons. Camera manipulation on the fly is hard (if not impossible) and advanced combos of moves like Spine Transfers and Reverts really take their toll on your fingers; on the flipside, huge combos now come with a feeling of physical achievement as well as big points. In all, the task of cramming the most concise *Hawk's* title to date onto a UMD has been largely successful, proving that Sony's handheld really can offer console-standard gaming on the move. It's just a shame that *THUG 2* is far better proof of this than it is a game suited to the PSP's slight size.

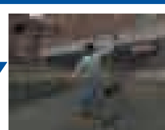
VERDICT 6/10
SAME SOLID GAME MADE A MITE FIDDLY

JET SET RADIO



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN

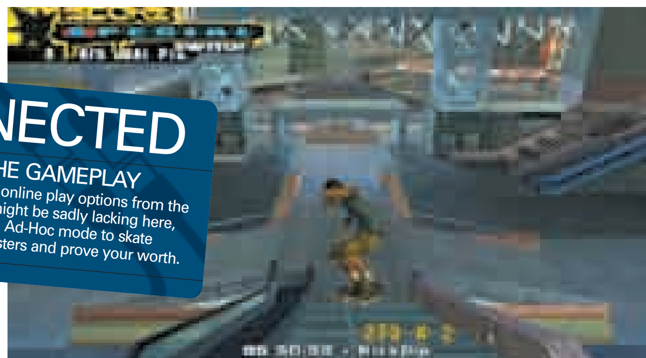


THUG 2



Rather than skate while you're outdoors, use your PSP to pretend to skate while you're outdoors.

games™ CONNECTED
EXPANDING THE GAMEPLAY
OR NOT...: While the online play options from the PlayStation2 version might be sadly lacking here, you can still rock out in Ad-Hoc mode to skate against local shredmeisters and prove your worth.



Try anything too complicated and you'll break a virtual leg… and a real-life thumb.

FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

ETCH A SKETCH: The unlockable Sketch Book enables you to create all sorts of amusing pictures and words. Now, how do you draw crude, two-dimensional bus-stop willies again…?



Get too many of those ghostly blighters on-screen at once and it just gets messy.



Those weird faces weren't in the original *Pac-Man*, but we live in the future now, where things have changed.

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
Nintendo DS

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Nintendo

DEVELOPER
Namco

PRICE
£29.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1

THE BASTARD LOVECHILD OF PAC-MAN AND PICTIONARY? NOT QUITE…

PAC-PIX

While the '*Catch! Touch! Yoshi!* isn't really a game' debate has divided the office down the middle, deciding *Pac-Pix*'s fate has been much easier. Yes, Namco's latest creation dutifully shows off the DS's abilities, and yes it offers a unique new way to play games, but even the most blinkered of DS fanboys should hopefully realise that *Pac-Pix* is little more than a tech demo that's been painfully stretched to breaking point. That's not to say it isn't fun (after all, drawing hideously misshapen Pac-Men was always going to raise a few laughs) but Namco seems so intent on delivering a unique experience that it's forgotten to add any depth to the proceedings. A shame really, as the game does offer plenty of promise.

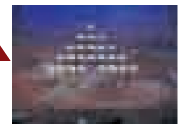
As with *Catch! Touch! Yoshi!*, *Pac-Pix*'s goals are straightforward and make great use of the DS's unique abilities. Each stage has a set amount of ghosts that you need to eliminate by drawing Pac-Men which you can then use to chase after the fleeing spectres. Draw a huge Pac-Man and you'll get a slow, lumbering behemoth; a tinier creation, on the other hand, is able to move much more quickly but becomes harder to control. While it's possible to draw all your Pac-Men straight away (you're given a set amount for each stage) allowing them to wander off the sides of the screen means they disappear forever; lose your allocation and you'll need to restart the stage. As the game progresses it becomes possible to draw new items such as bombs and arrows, and while this adds a great deal of strategy it does present one of *Pac-Pix*'s biggest problems…

For a title that's so reliant on you drawing multiple items as quickly as possible, it's a shame that the DS couldn't register them a little better. While Pac-Men are fairly easy to create, later items can sometimes prove frustratingly difficult to draw, and it doesn't get any easier when the screen's filled with several ghosts and multiple Pac-Men.

Pac-Pix's greatest fault, however, is that there simply isn't enough here to keep you entertained. While Namco has wisely included a grading system, the difficulty leaves a lot to be desired and the game will take next to no time to complete. Granted, there are some amusing extras (the neat Sketch Book springs to mind) but there simply isn't enough here. It's definitely a title that needs to be experienced, but whether it should sit proudly on your gaming shelf is less certain.

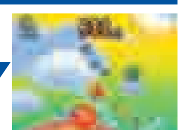
VERDICT 5/10
A GREAT CONCEPT THAT'S BEREFT OF LONGEVITY

SPACE INVADERS DS



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



CATCH! TOUCH! YOSHI!

STAR WARS EPISODE III: REVENGE OF THE SITH

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

OTHER FORMATS
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Activision

DEVELOPER
The Collective

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1

NEARLY AS BAD AS GREEDO SHOOTING FIRST

Last month, we suggested that for every good *Star Wars* game, there are three that are average at best. We were wrong; the number of duff games is probably closer to five. And *Revenge Of The Sith* does nothing to redress the balance.

To be fair, the game can't be faulted on its visual flair; as is often the case with *Star Wars* games, it's the quality of how *ROTS* presents the world of *Episode III* that makes it almost bearable. Splicing clips from the movie with well-rendered scenes using the game engine, the atmosphere is spot on – indeed, if it weren't for the laughable voice-acting (featuring some of the worst impressions of Ewan McGregor, Samuel L Jackson and Alex Guinness that we've ever heard), it would almost be enough to warrant playing the game through to its conclusion.

However, the sad fact is that the gameplay can't even get to the bank, let alone cash the cheques that the presentation writes. As basic as any scrolling slash-'em-up we've played, *ROTS*'s attempt to introduce complexity through the wide array of moves that you can perform is destroyed by the way you can get through almost the entire game by randomly pressing the X and Y buttons. The list of problems goes way beyond this, though. Harder enemies are only made so by them blocking your attacks more often, making killing them a matter of patience; the secrecy of hidden power-ups is negated by the game giving you an audio cue if you approach one; use of the Force is pitiful against games with proper physics like *Psi-Ops*; every objective you're given equates to killing anything that moves; the collision detection is way off in places, which makes the one-on-one battles incredibly frustrating… we could go on, but we hope you've got the point by now.

Quite simply, *Revenge…* is the worst kind of *Star Wars* game – one that looks good enough to appeal to impulsive fans, but ultimately fails to deliver by being a horribly derivative, stale and linear example of the genre it so lazily falls into. We know it's not impossible to make a great *Star Wars* title – how hard can it really be?

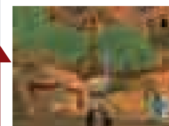
VERDICT 3/10
IMPRESSIVE VISUALS DISGUISE A WOEFUL HACK-'EM-UP

The fact that you can play the final level from either side allows you to change the outcome of the movie.



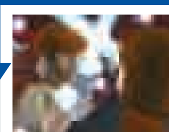
games™ CONNECTED
EXPANDING THE GAMEPLAY
JOIN FORCES: Four short, pointless co-op missions let two players fight together in selected areas.
TIME TO DUEL: There's a duelling arena where players can pit characters against each other.

STAR WARS: OBI-WAN



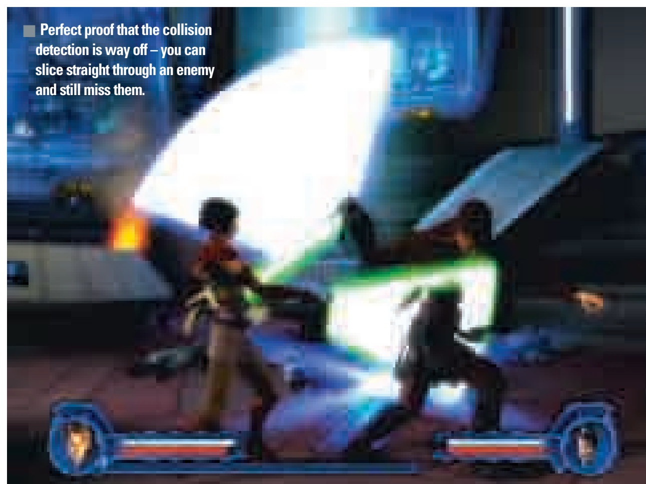
BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



LEGO STAR WARS





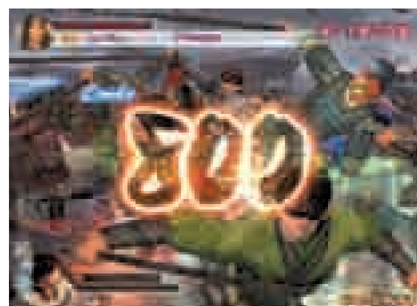
Perfect proof that the collision detection is way off – you can slice straight through an enemy and still miss them.


eMag



New boy Ling Tong is all about the nunchaku, flipping, yelping and spinning like an absolute crazy. Here, he's making a lot of death happen.


Yeah, you can still use a flute to take out an entire army. Class.


Only 800 kills? Get back out there and slay another thousand or so…

REJOICE – MORE "HUH, HUH, HUNGH!" FUN IS HERE

DYNASTY WARRIORS 5

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2
ORIGIN
Japan
PUBLISHER
Koei
DEVELOPER
In-House
PRICE
£39.99
RELEASE
Out Now
PLAYERS
1-2

It was a time of silly hats when loads of people decided to fight about who had the better headgear by hitting each other with things until everyone fell over. While this may not be the exact story behind Koei's *Three Kingdoms*-based battler, it's a good all-encompassing alternative – handy when you consider that Koei is trying to fill your brain with over 30 individual tales.

You see, rather than the Musou mode following one of several faction-based paths, each character has their own set of missions. This gives you several months' worth of play in this narrative-led mode alone before you even take into account the extra time you'll probably have to put into Free mode to build your chosen hero up to a point where they can reach their tale's conclusion. Add to that the fun to be had in the various challenges – newcomer Rampage mode is a particular favourite, throwing an endless string of weak-ass enemies at you as the KO Count rises into four figures in a matter of minutes – and the fan service elements such as the Encyclopaedia (which is far more interesting than it has any right to be) and you've got a good six months of enjoyment on your hands. By which time, *Dynasty Warriors 5: Xtreme Legends* will probably be in shops as well…

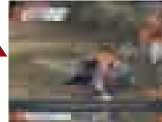
The only problem here is that like those that have gone before it, *Dynasty Warriors 5* isn't the most varied of games. It tries so hard to mix things up a little – settings, missions and characters all do their bit – but regardless of objectives it's still all too easy to cruise through much of the game simply by taking out your frustrations on the Square button with the odd tap of Triangle to break it up. That's not to say that this isn't a good thing in small doses – the sense of empowerment achieved through single-handedly laying waste to an entire battlefield is enormous – but try to sit down for an evening of mutilation and you'll probably just end up with RSI and a grunting-induced headache.

With less fogging and more enemies vying to hack you to bits at any one time, the action is far more intense this time around (albeit a little pop-up-heavy), and with a healthy variety of tunes where there were once chugging power chords it's impossible to deny the game's evolution. For all its improvements, though, there's nothing here that would draw in gamers who can't stand the genre, but if you do have a soft spot for mass slaughter, *Dynasty Warriors 5* is as good a place to get your fix as any.

VERDICT 7/10
IMPROVEMENTS KEEP THE FAMILIAR FRACAS AFLOAT

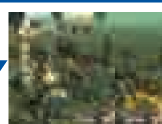
games™
ENHANCED
IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL
MORE: Try to clear everything and you'll easily wave goodbye to months of your life.
I'M AN INDIVIDUAL: Each character now plays that little bit differently. It's the little things…

DYNASTY WARRIORS 4



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



KINGDOM UNDER FIRE: THE CRUSADERS


eMag

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Sony

DEVELOPER
Namco

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-2 (1-8 Online)

MOTOGP 4

FINALLY, YOU CAN GO BIKING WITH FRIENDS



It's a well-known fact that you never forget how to ride a bike, and this is something that Namco would do well to remember. Over the years the *MotoGP* series has barely changed. The same characterless visuals and gameplay, which for some reason seemed to be acceptable when the first game was released due to their 'realistic' nature, have plagued the series every step of the way, and with each instalment they've become less tolerable. Well, another year has rolled by and the latest in the series has arrived – and it's much of the same again

It is, however, apparent that Namco has made more of an effort to shake things up this time. More focus has been placed on the multiplayer experience and extra modes, such as the frantic Melee mode that sees all competitors packed together at the start line. Furthermore, LAN link-up, online play (a first for the series) and the ability to use a headset to mock rivals all show that Namco is attempting to improve the formula, and these additions work nicely.

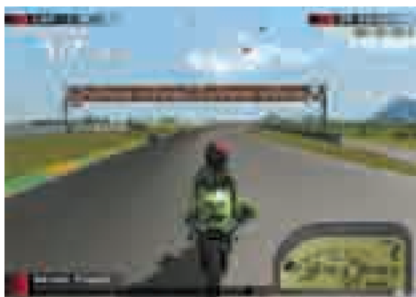
Unfortunately, this is where the praise ends and it's the main single-player game that lets the title down. Innovation here comes only in the form of an in-helmet view of the race and an updated bike and circuit list. This, coupled with the still bland visuals and unnecessarily twitchy handling that has featured in every other *MotoGP* title, really makes this game little more than average.

There are no huge faults here and the key problem is that the series seems happy to potter along without trying too hard – a strategy that is obviously doomed to fail. We now have access to racers like *Gran Turismo 4* and *Forza Motorsport*, games that combine realism and licensed vehicles with stunning visuals and addictive, competitive gameplay.

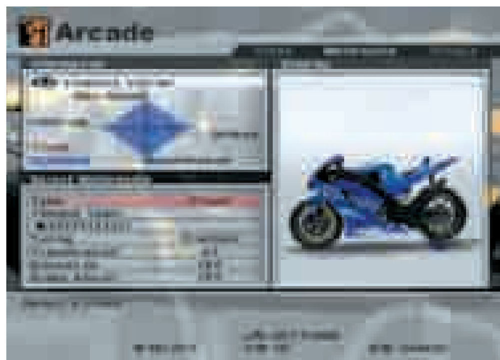
In short, *MotoGP 4* is really in no position to compete in any department other than it's the only game that features motorbikes. Sure, this is likely to snare fans of the sport and the *MotoGP* series – who will undoubtedly continue to find new ways to place the game on various pedestals – and the online capabilities of this latest offering certainly make for a nice bonus, but we really hoped Namco would iron out the flaws this time around.

VERDICT 6/10
SAVED BY THE MULTIPLAYER OPTIONS





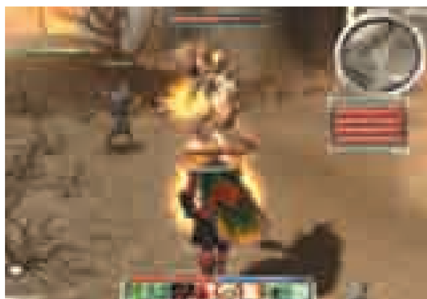
We're sorry, but we're really going to need more than an updated track and bike list to keep us happy.





Avoid tussles. You *will* end up on the floor. And that's what makes the Melee mode so interesting.

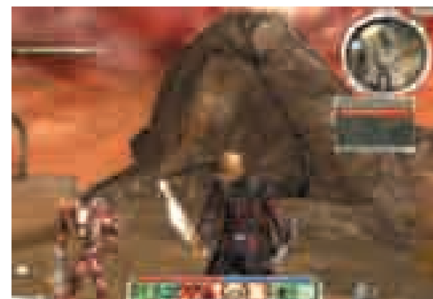

eMag



Although time and effort will see your character become far stronger, you'll start out ready for a brawl.

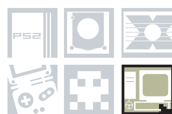


These friendly outposts are where characters gather. You're free to travel between any of these you've discovered whenever you wish.



Although you have two careers it's only your primary career that gives you a special ability. Ours? Reaping souls.

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
PC

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
NCsoft

DEVELOPER
ArenaNet

PRICE
£29.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
Massively Multiplayer

MINIMUM SPEC
Windows XP/2000/ME/98, Pentium III 800Mhz, 256Mb RAM, 2Gb HDD space, GeForce 3 or 4 video card

GUILD WARS

IF YOU GUILD IT, THEY WILL COME

MMORPGs are time-consuming affairs. It's all too easy to get far too involved in your little avatar's life and ignore your own existence completely. It's actually quite worrying. Still, the introduction of faster broadband and the dropping prices of online play are forcing massively multiplayer online PC gaming into our lives in many forms. Be it superheroes, elves or *Matrix*-esque characters, there's going to be something for everyone. And now ArenaNet has come up with *Guild Wars* – a game that's likely to hook beginners, veterans and even non-MMORPG players alike.

At a glance it all looks fairly standard. All that you'd expect to find in an MMORPG is here: party forming, trading and quests are all implemented as well as you'd hope but there are other elements that are of greater interest that manage to set *Guild Wars* apart. All the characters playing the game exist in the same virtual world – a first for an MMO title of this size – and with the players not separated by different servers it's possible to team up with anyone and everyone who's playing. Also separating *Guild Wars* from the pack is its 'instant action' way of doing things. From the moment you start you're thrust into battle. Whereas most games in the genre require a large amount of levelling up before you can challenge even a three-legged rabbit with any hope of success, *Guild Wars* will start you off with all you need to get yourself into a brawl with proper enemies. It's differences such as these that lead to ArenaNet itself claiming that this isn't a traditional MMORPG; it prefers the term CORPG (competitive online role-playing game), and in many ways we agree.



Aiding our decision to go along with this opinion is, in our mind, the most important aspect of the game: the highest experience level you can reach is 20. After that the only way of improving yourself is by collecting items and skills to add to your arsenal. Of the skills you've managed to attain, you can only take eight into any battle, so forward planning and tactical thinking are essential if you want to emerge victorious – think *Magic: The Gathering* and you won't be far off. There are bound to be a few who grunt with disgust at the thought of this, but it's an ingenious way of creating a level playing field. It's always irritating being pummelled to death by an inferior player just because they've spent more time with the game than you have; the *Guild Wars* system actually rewards skill rather than play time. It's a system that works

FAQs

Q. WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS WHEN I START?
The are six careers: Warrior, Ranger, Monk, Mesmer, Elemental and Necromancer.

Q. SO, NO SUBSCRIPTION FEES?
Nope. Not a sausage.

Q. WHAT ABOUT IN THE FUTURE?
It looks set to stay that way. Free, we tell you.



Unfortunately, only Rangers can have pets. We really wanted one but couldn't. Next time. Yes, next time…

extremely well and is sure to boost the competitiveness between guilds when it comes to ranking in the tournaments.

Of course, another huge selling point for *Guild Wars* is its rather agreeable price tag. Pushing the usual £29.99 in the direction of your local game store will put a copy in your hands, but – unlike most MMORPGs – that's where the spending will end. There are no additional fees, no credit cards required, and you're free to frolic in Ascalon for as long as you want without paying another penny. This alone is likely to ensure that *Guild Wars* appeals to many who have been reluctant to get involved with massively multiplayer games and is probably largely responsible for the length of time the title has already spent at number one in the PC charts.

Fortunately, even when this fact is ignored, *Guild Wars* fully deserves to be recognised as a chart-topper and, although it may lack the sense of immersion that titles like *World Of WarCraft* and *City Of Heroes* provide, it's a classic example of an 'easy to pick up, hard to put down' title; we get the feeling we're going to be putting the hours in for a long, long while. It's fair to say that anyone with a both a PC and decent internet connection should certainly be hunting down a copy – the *Guild Wars* experience is one that should definitely not be missed.

VERDICT 8/10
THE PERFECT WAY TO LOSE SO MUCH TIME

FINGERPRINT
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

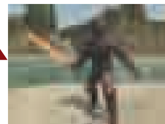
LIGHTS, CAMERA…: There's no tedious stat-building before a decent fight can occur.
MOVE ALONG: Travelling is sped up by the ability to move instantly between safe areas you've visited.

PICK 'N' MIX

When you start you'll be given a choice of six different careers. Of course, each of these has its own strengths and weaknesses and you'll need to ensure that you make a choice that suits the way you play. From healing Monks through to powerful Elementals there's a fair choice, but after your training you'll also get to choose another career from the list as your second profession. It's this second choice that give the game much of its versatility, and gives you the ability to craft a character that you can use effectively. It also means that you can't take an enemy character at face value, as you never know what tricks they could have up their sleeve.

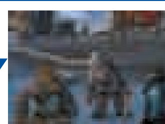


EVERQUEST II

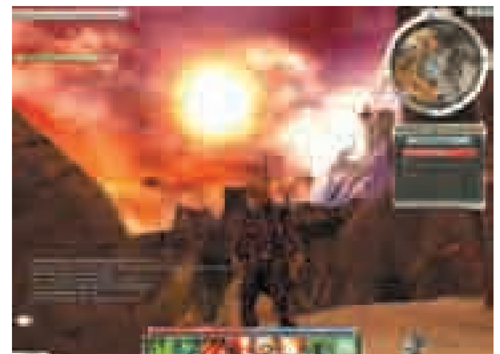


AS GOOD AS

WORSE THAN



WORLD OF WARCRAFT

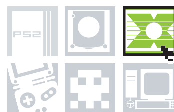


Character customisation is a little limited, but with plenty of dye on offer at least your armour will look smashing.

SLATE'S BACK, THE BODY COUNT'S HIGHER, BUT THE GAME IS MORE OF THE SAME

DEAD TO RIGHTS II

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

OTHER FORMATS
PlayStation2, PC

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Namco

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
3 August
(US: Out Now)

PLAYERS
1

Originally pegged as an Xbox exclusive until it found its way onto Sony's black box, *Dead To Rights* was never a game that pushed the boundaries of the third-person action genre, but rather served as an average stopgap until something better came along. With its tongue firmly in its cheek, this campy sequel sees hero Jack Slate and his trusty canine, Shadow, embark on a blood-soaked tale as wafer-thin as its predecessor. Slate, hell-bent on racking up a body count that would put Arnie to shame, has discovered that a respected judge (and former friend of his father) who uncovered a huge crime syndicate operating within the city has been kidnapped by ne'er-do-wells. With that, the Charles Bronson-esque cop embarks on a bullet-riddled, death-fuelled rampage.

Gameplay mechanics-wise, it's primarily the same as before with an auto-targeting system implemented in true arcade style, which simply requires to the player to tap the shoulder button to cycle through enemies that appear in waves. Over the course of the game there's a vast selection of weaponry at your disposal including dual pistols, machine guns and the statutory shotgun. And, as with the previous offering, Slate is adept at lethal disarms and brutal executions that you can't help but find amusing in a rather twisted way. Much like the hammy dialogue, however, these disarms are too farcical to be believed.

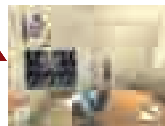
Coupled with those nifty disarms is the ability to use enemies as shields to protect yourself; Shadow will also tear out an enemy's throat if asked, loyally handing you their weapon if the situation calls for it. One of the most significant alterations is the playing down of the hand-to-hand combat levels that played a noteworthy role in the first game. Missions requiring you to use only your fists and feet are vastly shorter than before, a lot less tedious and can ultimately be sailed through by repeatedly tapping the A button.

While offering much of the same entertainment as before, *Dead To Rights II* is a visual improvement on the first game, with some fun destructible environments and an enhanced bullet-time mode. Regardless, this doesn't hide the fact that this is as generic as they come and way too expensive considering its lacklustre subject matter and execution. For all that, though, it provides a limited amount of mindless fun that's worthy of only a rental.



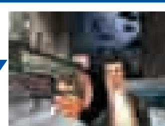
VERDICT 4/10
CONTRIVED SHOOTER WITH LITTLE TO NO DEPTH

MIAMI VICE



BETTER THAN

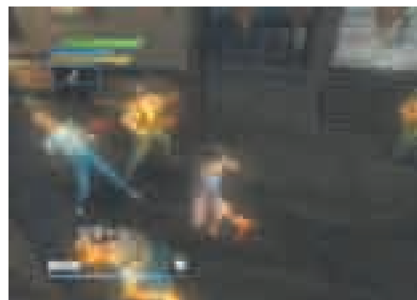
WORSE THAN



MAX PAYNE



Bullet time plays a major part in the mechanics of *Dead To Rights II*, much like it did in the first game.

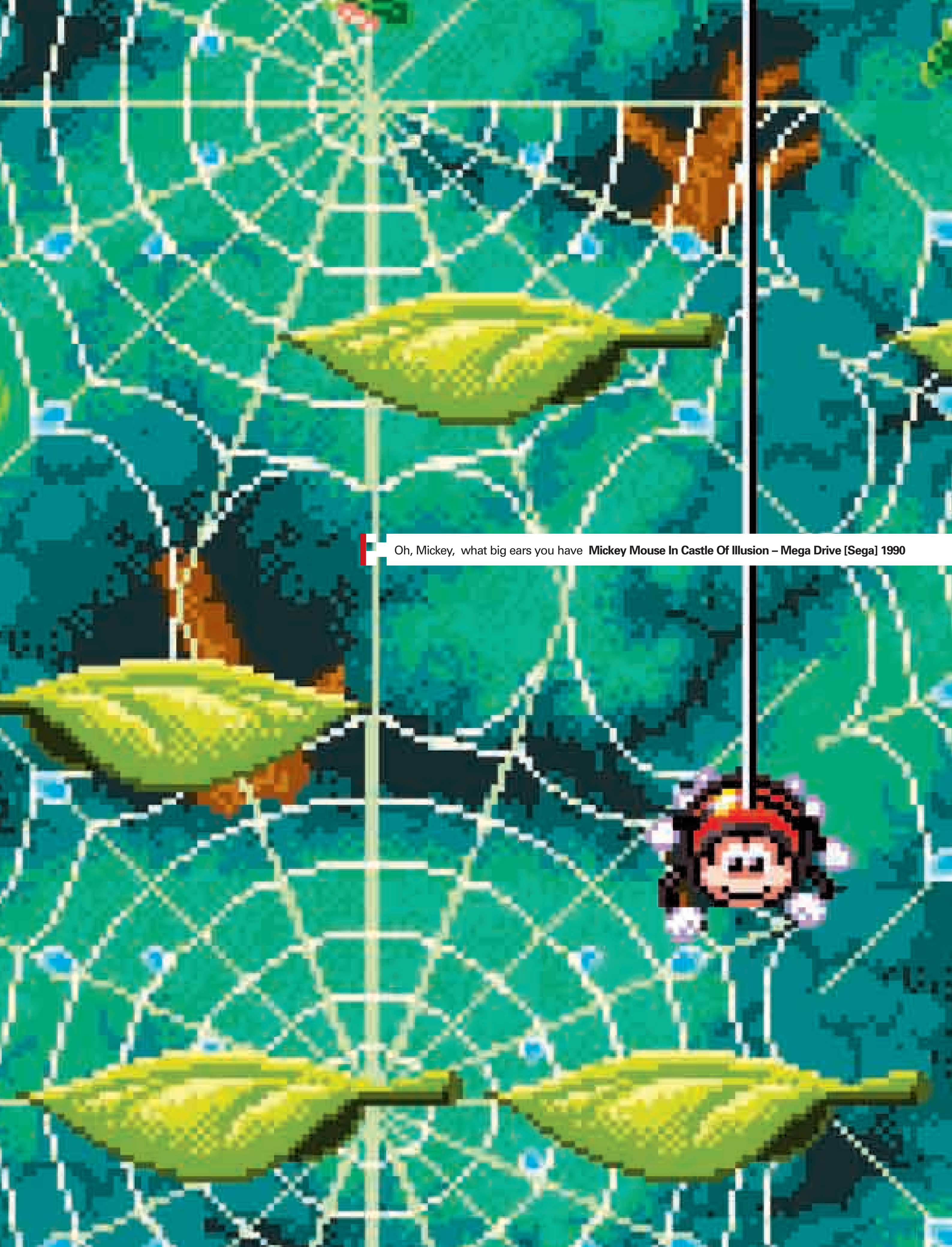


Uber-violent disarms and all sorts of household objects can be used to butcher enemies.




eMag





Oh, Mickey, what big ears you have **Mickey Mouse In Castle Of Illusion – Mega Drive [Sega] 1990**


eMag

RETRO

MICRO GAMES ACTION

A PARAGON PUBLICATION
NO.33 JUNE 2005
00p

THE MONTHLY OLD-SCHOOL SOFTWARE REVIEW

WORLD OF SPECTRUM

Behind the scenes at the ultimate Spectrum website

WHY WAS THE SNES SO DAMN GREAT?

BOMB JACK

WHICH 8-BIT VERSION IS THE BEST?

Day Of The Tentacle

The greatest retro game ever?

GETTING DIZZY

THE OLIVER TWINS REVEAL ALL

FEATURE

RETRO NEWS

Find out what's going on in the here and now of retro gaming

If you wanted, you could buy a Crazy Frog ringtone. Or set fire to your neighbour's garden fence. Or even fill up the cartridge slot of your favourite retro console with jam. But let's remember, people – just because you can do something, it doesn't mean you should.

What has sparked this moralising? The news of *Final Fight: Streetwise*. Capcom's a big company with a back catalogue of classic games. If it wants, it can remake any of them with all the graphical updates, gameplay additions and multiplayer doohickeys it likes. But in this case, it really shouldn't. All the polygons and ultra-violence in the world can't replace the soul of a truly great game, and throwing fancy graphics at a title just to cash in on a name forever associated with classic gameplay is pretty low.

There's been talk for a while of a 3D Dizzy revival, but the Oliver twins haven't rushed to drag him into the next generation, perhaps wisely realising that the games work perfectly in 2D, and tinkering too much may shatter some prized memories. Maybe a 3D game will happen in the future, but in the meantime we're very happy with our two dimensions. And you can find out about the history of Dizzy in our six-page interview with the Oliver twins…

Darran Jones, Retro Editor

WANT TO BE A RECORD BREAKER?

TWIN GALAXIES COMES TO THE UK TO FIND OUR HIGH-SCORE CHAMPS

Twin Galaxies is the definitive record of videogaming high scores and feats of games-playing. And now UK gamers who think they've got something to prove will be able to meet the scoreboard's creator and co-ordinator, Walter Day, when he appears at the Classic Gaming Expo UK (CGEUK) in June. We had a chat with Walter to find out what qualities he'll be looking for when he arrives on British soil.

games™: What convinced you to come to the UK?

Walter Day: Our main reason for coming to the UK is to identify the champions of the UK and get them into the book [*Twin Galaxies' Official Video Game & Pinball Book Of World Records*]. As its stands, we're worried that some deserving UK superstars are being overlooked by the *Book Of Records*. However, much of the inspiration to come to CGE UK is that Gary Whelan has led the way for British gamers, being the first UK player to capture a significant world record on a classic game in more than 20 years. Since parity is beginning to develop between US and UK players, it's about time they faced off in a classic competition.

g™: How many US record holders are coming over with you and do you expect to beat the Brits?

WD: The top players coming so far include Donald Hayes, Billy Mitchell, Dwayne Richard, Todd Rogers, Greg Sakundiak, Brian Kuh, David Nelson and Shawn Cram. Donald Hayes is the world's most successful classic gamer, currently holding the world records on *Frogger*, *Tron*, *Centipede*, *Millipede*, *Super Zaxxon*, *Domino Man*, *Dig Dug* and *Berzerk*. I think the US and Canadian players might win simply because the North American players have enjoyed a longer retrogaming hobby than the UK and this has given them more time to get ready. However, the Brits will probably prove to be very tough competitors.

g™: Are there going to be specific game challenges, or can people choose what records to break?

WD: For the Classics event, there will be five games that everyone has to play. Their scores are converted into 'averages' that will be ranked in order to determine the winners. Among the Brits, Gary Whelan will attempt to break his *Galaxian* record, while Tony Temple will work on the *Missile Command* record; the Americans will be focusing on the Classics Championship, hoping to take home the newly created 'European belt'.

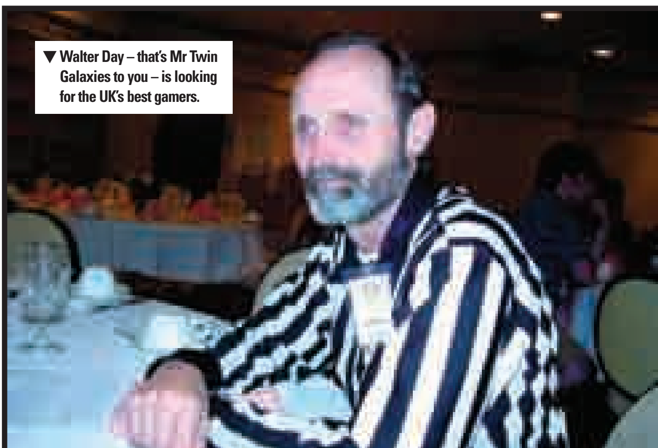
There will be many games open to the public with the hope that people will come and try for records while Twin Galaxies is in town. In fact, we hope players on all consoles come and see this event and introduce themselves to the Twin Galaxies staff so that we won't miss putting any UK superstars into the *Book Of Records*.

g™: How will the record attempts be managed?

WD: The special events on *Galaxian* and *Missile Command* will be set aside from the Classics Championship. Their performances will be videotaped for historical preservation. There will be a special awards ceremony on Saturday night where Gary Whelan will receive superlative honours. Some additional awards recipients will be there, too, whose names are being kept secret as a surprise.

g™: Will there be further collaborations with Twin Galaxies and the UK retro scene?

WD: Absolutely. The UK is coming into its own as a formidable gaming power and the Europeans, Americans and Canadians are sure to want to keep coming back to London to try and win this European Belt.



▼ Walter Day – that's Mr Twin Galaxies to you – is looking for the UK's best gamers.

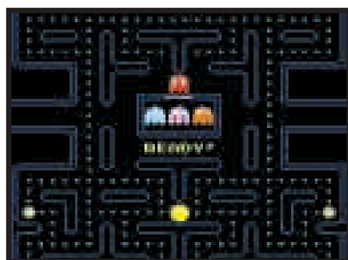
R·E·T·R·O· N·E·W·S· R·E·T·R·O· N·E·W·S·

GAMING NEWS

Namco flashbacks

NAMCO PREPARES FOR A RETRO BLOWOUT

Not content with announcing its *NamCollection* for the PS2 (five visually updated PSone titles including *Ridge Racer*, *Tekken* and *Mr Driller*), Namco is sharing more retro goodies. First off is an updated version of its *Namco Museum* compilation for the PSP. It's unclear if it will appear in the UK, but the US version will contain ten extra titles that weren't available on the Japanese release. Lucky US gamers will be able to play the likes of *Tower Of Druaga*, *Xevious*, *Bosconian* and *Dragon Buster* by the end of the summer.



In addition, *Namco Museum 50th Anniversary Arcade Collection* will feature 14 titles from the Seventies and Eighties, including *Pac-Man*, *Ms Pac-Man*, *Galaga*, *Galaxian*, *Pole Position* and *Rolling Thunder*. Hardly an innovative collection, then, but we'll keep an eye out for it anyway.

Do the Manbow

IS THIS THE RETURN OF A CLASSIC MSX TITLE?

Retro gamers who own a Game Boy Advance and a Nintendo DS may be in for a treat if they also have Konami's *Goemon* game for both systems. Japanese website retropc.net has reported that by putting both games into the DS at once, players can unlock a version of *Space Manbow*, a side-scrolling MSX shooter.

Space Manbow was released in 1990 by Konami and was exclusive to the MSX, which will surely pique the interest of any fans of the developer. For gamers mourning the demise of the MSX, there's a treat on the DS's bottom screen – during play, it will show an MSX with a *Space Manbow* cart inserted. Although it's not that well known, *Space Manbow* was a great shmup with terrific visuals, so if this cartridge-link trick really works we might have to snap up a few *Goemon* games.

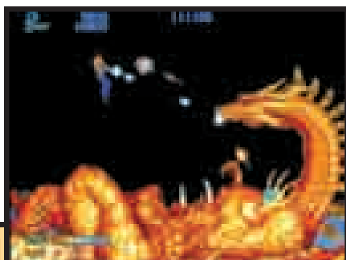
Capcompilation

BANDWAGON-JUMPING BY TOP PUBLISHER

Capcom has announced that a compilation of some of its top retro titles will be released in America in September. *Capcom Classics Collection* will feature more than 20 of the company's most famous titles, including *1942*, *1943*, *Bionic Commando*, *Final Fight*, *Ghosts 'N' Goblins*, *Ghouls 'N' Ghosts* and *Street Fighter II*.

Appearing on Xbox and PlayStation2, the collection spans ten years of Capcom games from the arcade and home systems, and a range of bonus features are also promised. However, it's disappointing that many of these titles have been seen on previous compilations. With an increasing number of developers riding the coat-tails of retrogaming, collections such as this need to start offering rarer games, or at least ones that haven't reappeared on modern consoles recently.

As yet, there's no news of a UK release, but we'll keep you posted.



Retro DIARY

As old-school gaming gets more popular, it's about time everyone knew about upcoming retro events…

JUNE '05

Dragon Force
Date: 28 June **Publisher:** Sega **Price:** £16
Dragon Force was a superb strategy title on the Saturn and featured tense battles, hundreds of sprites and increasingly strategic gameplay. As a result, we're more than interested to see what the PlayStation2 version has to offer.

AUGUST '05

CGE UK
Date: 13 August **Location:** Fairfield Halls, Croydon **Price:** TBC
After the success of last year's event, we've been told that this year's CGE UK is going to be even bigger. Look out for guest appearances from Matthew Smith, Archer Maclean, Jeff Minter and several ex-Ocean staff. And that's just for starters….

Classic Gaming Expo (CGE)
Date: TBA **Location:** TBA **Price:** TBA
Last year's event was attended by none other than Konami and Midway and proved to be a huge success. As the expo prepares to enter its eighth year, you can be sure that 2005's event will be even better.

SEPTEMBER '05

Jagfest '05
Date: TBC **Location:** TBC **Price:** TBC
Details are still sketchy at the moment, but Jagfest UK should be returning this year. The event has been running for several years and has slowly been gathering momentum. If you're a fan of Atari's ill-fated console, check it out.

Namco Museum 50th Anniversary Arcade Collection
Date: TBC **Location:** Namco **Price:** TBC
The Xbox and PlayStation2 get their own dose of old-school arcade action with this collection of 14 Namco titles. The likes of *Pac-Man*, *Galaxian* and *Pole Position* will jostle for space with *Rolling Thunder* and *Galaga*.

Capcom Classics Collection
Date: TBC **Location:** Capcom **Price:** TBC
Another 'best-of' retro compilation, this time from Capcom. Some arguably fine titles are included (*1942*, *Street Fighter II*, *Ghouls 'N' Ghosts*) but will a few extra features make this worth a purchase?

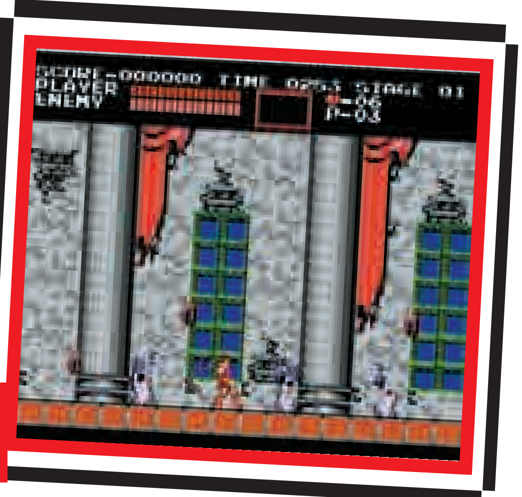
OCTOBER '05

Sega Classics Collection
Date: TBC **Publisher:** Sega **Price:** TBC
Sega's latest compilation features remakes of many of its classic arcade games and is available for PS2. *Golden Axe*, *OutRun*, *Space Harrier* and *Columns* are just a few of the games on offer.

Midway Arcade Treasures 3
Date: TBC **Publisher:** Midway **Price:** TBC
Keen to try something new, Midway's third compilation has a racing theme and features the likes of *Hydro Thunder*, *S.T.U.N. Runner* and *Badlands*. Let's just hope *Hydro Thunder* is the original arcade game and not the mediocre PlayStation version.

If you know of, or are hosting, any retro events, please contact the Retro Editor at darranj@paragon.co.uk

Rom Service



▶ Naughty coder types have already upgraded existing PSP NES emulators so classic titles can be yours.

IT HASN'T TAKEN LONG FOR THE LATEST WAVE OF HANDHELD MACHINES TO PLAY HOST TO A FEW OLD FAVOURITES. AND WE'RE NOT TALKING OFFICIALLY SANCTIONED RE-RELEASES…

S*uper Mario* on Sony's PlayStation Portable? It might not be the old versus new culture clash we're all waiting for, but until Girls Aloud start covering The Doors this is clearly the next best thing. Following in the wake of the Game Boy emulators that have cropped up on Sony's handheld, NES emulators have already made their debut with coders blazing their way through updates and refinements.

The infoNES emulator first appeared in early May and has already gone from version 0.1 to version 1.5 in little over a month. While initially crippled with awful slowdown and no sound, the problems are slowly being eliminated with each update.

There are still some issues with game saves and users have moaned they'd like a control configuration option (the current button set-up has B mapped to the PSP's X button and A mapped to the O button). However, the most recent updates have taken into account the PSP's updated 1.5 firmware – it originally only worked on the 1.0 firmware on the initial batch of sold PSPs – and it seems it's only a matter of time before the perfect, glitch-free NES emulator rears its head.

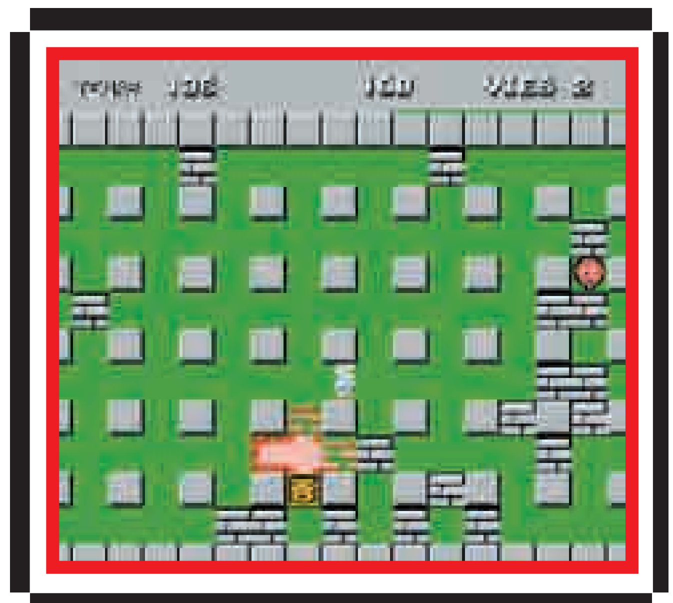
Some may question the point of playing 20-year-old, graphically simple games on a piece of hardware designed to throw polygons at you like dirty toys, but this breakthrough means there are more options available to the Nintendo retro gamer than ever before – the PSP emulator, Blaze Pocket Fami and, of course, Nintendo's own £15 reissues of its classic games on the Game Boy Advance. All of this means another way of looking at this breakthrough is that both the DS and PSP can play NES games. What a confusing world the handheld emulation scene is.

Regardless, this is just the latest milestone in a burgeoning emulator scene on the PSP, with PC Engine, Neo-Geo and SNES emulators the latest targets. There's even talk of coders cracking their knuckles for a fresh assault on the PSP to try to squeeze a Nintendo 64 emulator into its small confines, taking advantage of the PSP's analogue stick.

Now that really would top anything Girls Aloud could do…



▲ First Sonic on a non-Sega console, now Mario cavorting all over Sony's PSP. Strange world…



▲ It's hardly testing the PSP, but old-school *Bomberman* can't be beaten for tactical explosive action.

GREAT GAME BOSSES



GEMINI WING

On a wing and a prayer…

You can always guarantee that a cutesy shooter like *Gemini Wing* is going to have some pretty bizarre bosses, but a Malteser-spewing walrus? Get out of town.

Nevertheless, that's exactly what you faced as you reached the end of the first level and, boy, it wasn't a pretty sight. What made his sudden appearance even more alarming was that everything had started off so innocently with a selection of sickly sweet enemies.

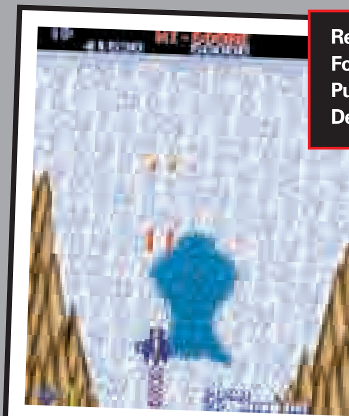
Bullet-spewing butterflies, giant bug-eyed flies and weird flying scorpions were just a few of the insectoid foes you encountered as you flew over *Gemini Wing*'s sparse landscape, and though they attacked en masse, a few quick laser blasts quickly sorted them out.

Disarmed by the sickeningly twee music and chasing after the game's impressive power-ups you hardly noticed that the cheerful tune had been replaced by the thundering rumble of a waterfall.

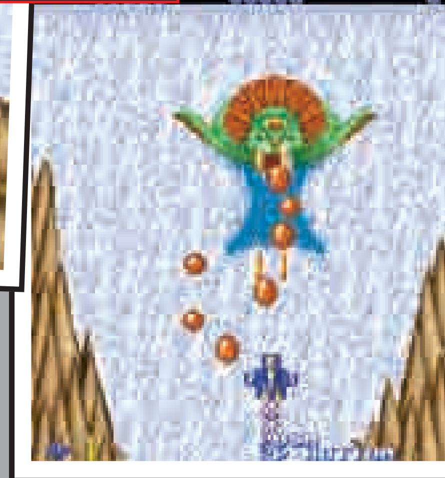
Gathering your nerves for the upcoming battle you felt a knot form in your stomach as a dark, ominous shape sped through the water below.

Your tiny craft was immediately dwarfed by the biggest walrus you'd even seen (and were ever likely to). Within a few seconds the gigantic sea creature was spewing out what can only be described as highly dangerous Maltesers. Luckily, your enemy's bullet pattern was easy enough to avoid and you quickly moved towards his head, almost tasting your blubbery opponent's death.

But without warning, your aquatic foe dived down the screen and back into the water. Caught unaware by this sudden movement you hardly noticed that you'd just lost your last life. Damn…



Release: 1987
Format: Arcade
Publisher: Tecmo
Developer: In-House



▲ Giant, blubbery walruses – the boss you can enjoy between fights without ruining your appetite.

Worst LICENCE EVER

● THUNDERCATS ●

Thunder, Thunder, Thundercats, nooooooo…

The cartoon exploits of Lion-O, Panthro and Cheetara made for crucial after-school viewing in the mid-Eighties and we'd often tune in just to see the mighty Mumm-Ra (easily the scariest cartoon villain ever). And you could guarantee that the next day there'd be some hyperactive clown wielding an imaginary Sword of Omens in the playground.

Recognising the popularity of the show, Elite snapped up the licence rights and *Thundercats* was quickly turned into one of the most generic hack-and-slash titles we've ever seen. It may have had superb music (courtesy of Rob Hubbard) but everything else was rather lacking and after a few minutes of repetitive play it was obvious that *Thundercats* was nothing more than a quick and easy cash-in.

Gameplay was worryingly simplistic and consisted of little more than running along and hacking up poorly animated enemies with the Sword of Omens while you continued your search for the legendary Eye of Thundera. But not only did *Thundercats* suffer from an embarrassing lack of depth, it was also ridiculously hard. We'd like to say that it was because we weren't that good at it, but the truth is that it was crippled by horrible pixel-perfect jumps and frightening collision detection.

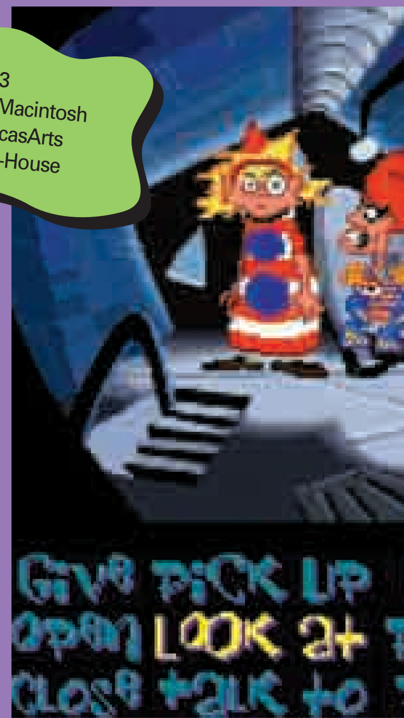
Despite these faults, the game sold predictably well and garnered impressive scores from all the Spectrum magazines at the time. So was it really any good, then? Nah, we reckon the Speccy mags were just chuffed that it turned out better than the C64 version…



Release: 1987
Format: Various Home Systems
Publisher: Elite
Developer: Gargoyle Games

▲ Well, that could be Lion-O attacking a, er, giant humanoid mouse. But we're too bored to work it out.

Release: 1993
Format: PC, Macintosh
Publisher: LucasArts
Developer: In-House



Maniac Mansion Day of the Tentacle™



YOU'LL NEVER LOOK AT CALAMARI THE SAME WAY AGAIN…

Those of you who know us well will be aware that we have a thing for LucasArts adventure games. *Sam & Max: Hit The Road, Full Throttle, The Secret Of Monkey Island*… all games that deserve their distinguished places in the annals of history, if only because they gave us pleasure while also making us pull out our hair in puzzled frustration during our misspent youth. That said, deciding which title is better is where the confusion lies, as everyone has their own favourites – some prefer the violent slapstick of detective dog Sam and floppy-eared psychopath Max, others like helping Guybrush Threepwood achieve his ambition of becoming a pirate. If, however, you have a taste for the 'just plain weird' variety of comedy, tied together with some incredibly obscure puzzles, there really is only one choice…

Of course, it should have been obvious that *Day Of The Tentacle* was going to be more than the normal point-and-click adventure game that we'd become used to before it came out in 1993, simply because it followed on from *Maniac Mansion* – Ron Gilbert's original SCUMM game that started the ball rolling (see the 'SCUMM Of The Earth' boxout).

Featuring the Edison clan – a freaky family that would put the Mansons to shame – and a group of high-school kids out to rescue their beloved cheerleader Sandy, *Maniac Mansion* was strange to say the least. This wasn't just because its use of the SCUMM interface was completely new and original, but also due to its bizarre plot (evil purple meteor crash-lands on Earth and brainwashes mad scientist, then tries to take over the world) and a cast of characters including the mummified corpse, a blue-skinned nurse and a pair of independently minded tentacles called Green and Purple. Naturally, much hilarity ensued with you having to sneak around the Edison mansion, avoid the likes of Dr Fred, Weird Ed, Dead Cousin Ted and (of course) the tentacles and solve all manner of twisted puzzles that required your brain to be sharper than a surgeon's scalpel.

Fast-forward six years, then, and despite the destruction of Dr Fred's evil purple meteor overlord, things haven't changed much for the Edisons – they still live in a run-down motel-cum-mansion, Dr Fred is still coming up with strange inventions, the tentacles are still roaming the halls, and Dead Cousin Ted is still, er, dead. Unfortunately, it would seem that Purple Tentacle has had enough of living under such an oppressive regime (if you could call it that) and after drinking the toxic water that Dr Fred's patented Sludge-O-Matic pumps into the nearby river, he decides to… TAKE ON THE WORLD! Ooh, scary.

And so, *Day Of The Tentacle* begins, with the only people able to save the world from suction cup-based destruction being you and a trio of heroes that look vaguely familiar… or at least, one of them does, thanks to Bernard The Nerd (possibly the most unlikely

▼ Weird Ed now collects stamps, although he still has a strange love for his hamster.





▲ Meet Laverne, wearing what has to be the least convincing tentacle outfit ever. Doesn't stop it working, mind…

Greatest RETRO Game Ever

THE SCUMM OF THE EARTH

The birth of SCUMM – the Script Creation Utility for *Maniac Mansion* – is something that stands out as a historic moment in adventure game history. That the system only exists due to creator (and then young programmer) Ron Gilbert being stubborn enough not to compromise what he wanted to do in *Maniac Mansion*, ultimately requiring him to create his own toolset, is perhaps a godsend, if only because it then allowed him – and LucasArts – to build an empire of point-and-click adventures that are as good today as when they were first released. By allowing players to apply a variety of actionable verbs to any object they came across, the SCUMM system was hugely accessible and allowed for huge amounts of creativity within each game on both the part of the player and the puzzle designer; without it, adventure games would most likely still be stuck in the virtual stone age.

candidate to survive through to *Maniac Mansion*'s sequel as a playable character) making a comeback as the leader of *DOTT*'s ragtag band of saviours.

So far, as good as *Maniac Mansion*, then. But, thankfully, lessons had been learned from previous titles such as *Secret Of Monkey Island* on just how far such adventure games could push the player's logical limit when it came to solving puzzles. As such, *Day Of The Tentacle* was (and still is) one of the most complex and illogical games ever created by LucasArts… although that's not nearly as bad as it sounds.

Despite splitting the player's team of heroes in three just as *Maniac Mansion* did, *Day Of The Tentacle* took things one step further and spread the trio across time as well as space – Hoagie, the stereotypical rock'n'roll buffoon, ends up at the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Laverne goes way into a future controlled by tentacles, and Bernard… well, Bernard goes nowhere. But this in itself created a unique situation that required much brain power on the part of the player; items collected in one time period could be used by any other character if you sent it through Dr Fred's time-travelling Chron-O-John toilet, effectively tripling the amount of trial and error required to solve the puzzles simply because you never knew where each item was needed.

Of course, you didn't need any trial and error if you actually stopped to think about what you might need and where. With Laverne stuck in a futuristic kumquat tree, for instance, and George Washington only willing to chop down cherry trees in the past, it would make sense that Hoagie would need some way of fooling the former president, so the pot of red paint found nearby comes in handy. Although when Bernard also needs the same paint later on, some time-travelling tomfoolery is required on Hoagie's part… Like we said, it all made some kind of sense if you thought about it. Not much sense, but certainly *some kind*.

The strange thing is, even though we've played through all of LucasArts' damn fine SCUMM-based titles, *Day Of The Tentacle* still stands out as one of the most unique – the comedy was more than a little surreal (almost on a par with *Sam & Max*), the visual style stood out a mile and, if you were lucky enough to own the CD version, the voice acting was hilarious. It might not have been the longest SCUMM game ever, but it's certainly one of the best. We just wish they'd think about making a follow-up…



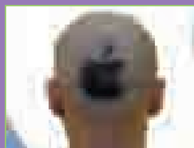
OTHER HIGHLIGHTS OF 1993

CARTOON HEROES



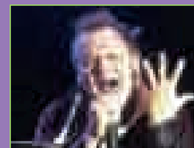
If you thought *Ren & Stimpy* was too crude, then *2 Stupid Dogs* was for you. Essentially the same idea but without the vulgarity, it was overlooked by many, even though it was incredibly funny.

FASHION VICTIM



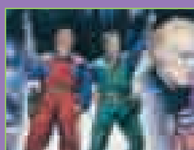
Fancy looking like an arse and not being able to do anything about it for a couple of weeks? Then shave a corporate logo into your head. Thankfully, the trend didn't last. Because it was stupid.

ON THE RADIO



Every night was Meat Loaf night in November 1993 – the overweight rocker made a comeback with *I'll Do Anything For Love (But I Won't Do That)*. Exactly what 'that' was, however, still isn't clear.

AT THE MOVIES



Our childhood memories of Mario were ruined by *Super Mario Brothers*. It still stands as one of the worst game-licensed movies – Dennis Hopper was a human Bowser and Daisy wore jeans.

FAST FOOD



This year saw McDonald's open its first restaurant in the Middle East, setting up shop in Tel Aviv, Israel. There are now over 80 branches in Israel alone, complete with a kosher menu; that's, um, progress.





Crazy add-ons, secret Sony components, ageless games – the Super Nintendo had it all. John Szczepaniak finds out how…

Sega, believe it or not, played a big role in the development of the Super Nintendo Entertainment System (aka Super Famicom).

Nintendo had never been in any rush to release a follow-up to the NES; indeed, the then president of the company, Hiroshi Yamauchi, has said that he was reluctant to release the SNES due to the massive installed user-base and popularity of its predecessor. Even so, Yamauchi had been planning a 16-bit follow-up since the late Eighties. The person he asked to design the new technology was arguably the best man for the job, Masayuki Uemura, who in 1983 had designed the Famicom/NES.

Despite planning a NES successor from early on, Nintendo had grown complacent as the top dog, controlling over three quarters of the market. Yamauchi's initial intention to launch the SNES in 1990 began to fade as his perceived invincibility grew. This would prove to be a dangerous mistake when NEC launched its PC-Engine in Japan and the US, and Sega followed suit by releasing its Mega Drive system worldwide.

Initially, Yamauchi's only worry had been NEC, which was investing billions of dollars in research and development. At the time this was more than Nintendo's total gross profits for the year, so he was understandably concerned. But despite being technically more powerful than the NES, the PC-Engine lacked amazing games; unlike Nintendo, NEC had no Miyamoto-like figures able to create iconic franchises. With little dent to NES sales, Nintendo relaxed.

The fire under Nintendo that spurred it into releasing the SNES was Sega and its ability to entice third-party developers over to the Mega Drive. Its growing selection of titles and arcade conversions were slowly drawing away previously staunch Nintendo supporters.

COLOUR ME GOOD

Yamauchi left the technical specs of the SNES to Uemura, with the only request being to try to make it backwards compatible. Uemura was unable to fulfil this demand cheaply, so the idea was scrapped. Part of the reason for being unable to make it compatible was the massive technological advancement.

As well as the standard CPU upgrading, the biggest and most noticeable improvement over the NES was colour. In the end, the SNES was able to use a palette of 32,768 colours, which gave it 630 times more

S.N.E.S

SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

Retro Machine



PRICE GUIDE

The SNES market has changed greatly since the heady days of the early Nineties. The machine is now very affordable and has many new oddities being released by the underground community.

SNES: £8
The original UK model can now be picked up for a shamefully low price unboxed at car boot sales. Any yellow 'sun staining' is an optional extra.

MODDING: £FREE!
Go to www.mmmonkey.co.uk/console/index.htm for free guides to easily modding your UK system so your games run full speed and without borders, just like an import machine. Why have one shipped from the US when the UK model is cheaper, looks better and can be easily made multi-region?

SKYBLAZER: £4
Overlooked and very atmospheric platformer with amazing music. Made, funnily enough, by Nintendo's biggest rival, Sony. Cheap and highly recommended.

TOTOTEK SNES FLASH CART: APPROX £45
While ethically debatable, Game Doctor devices and flash carts like these will allow you to play any backed-up games (even patched into English) on a UK system. Games with extra hardware like *Super Mario RPG* won't work, though.


▲ Ryu and his turbo-charged mates proved a huge selling point for the SNES.

colours than the NES, and 64 times more than the Mega Drive. From this massive number the SNES was able to display 256 colours simultaneously on screen (four times as many as its Sega rival). If Nintendo was hoping to blow the competition out of the water on brute power alone, it was certainly on course. The use of colour is an important point since more than any other system of that hardware era (and, indeed, preceding and subsequent eras) the visuals of the SNES have aged best – even today they are able to impress gamers.

But perhaps the most interesting event in the SNES's conceptualisation involves its sound chip. The story goes that Ken Kutaragi, who later developed the PlayStation, had bought his daughter a Famicom and was disappointed with its sound capabilities and use of cartridges. So he secretly approached Nintendo, without the backing of Sony's executives, and asked if it would use the floppy disk technology developed by his research team. Nintendo said no, but it did want him to develop a sound chip for the follow-up machine.

Without permission, Kutaragi worked on the project in secret, only revealing it to his personal boss in R&D. The result was the 8-channel Sony SPC700 chip. Sony's executives were furious when they discovered Kutaragi had been collaborating with what they perceived as the enemy. But with the smell of money in the air, Sony president Norio Ogha relented and agreed to supply Nintendo.

It was this initially amicable agreement that led to Nintendo approaching Sony and Kutaragi again in 1988 regarding a potential Super Disc Drive add-on for the gestating SNES. Famously, this led to the parting of the two companies, Nintendo's courting of Philips (which created the CDi *Zelda* games), and then Sony releasing its PlayStation based on the cannibalised remnants of Nintendo's planned add-on. What few realise is just how far the add-on had progressed. It's been confirmed that some of Nintendo's most trusted developers had indeed been sent SNES CD development kits.

"THE SUPER FAMICOM LAUNCHED IN JAPAN VIA 'OPERATION MIDNIGHT SHIPPING' TO STOP THE JAPANESE MAFIA HIJACKING SHIPMENTS"

IT'S IN THE GAME

The controller Nintendo would use for the SNES was to be an evolution of the NES pad, using the same patented D-pad technology created by Gunpei Yokoi for Nintendo's Game & Watch series. With six colour-coded digital buttons, plus start and select, it was the most advanced controller for that generation. Its light weight and sublimely comfortable grip mean it's still regarded as one of the best digital pads ever designed.

Of course, Yamauchi realised that no console could launch without a game that showcased the power available. With *Super Mario Bros. 3* being Nintendo's most successful title to date, Yamauchi and son-in-law Minoru Arakawa (who ran the American side of things) reasoned there was no better game to sell the system than a sequel to their previous smash hit. It was decided that when the SNES launched in each international territory it would do so with *Super Mario Bros. 4*, later named *Super Mario World*.

The development of this important title was handed to Nintendo's resident guru, Shigeru Miyamoto. Along with the rest of his 30-strong development team, Miyamoto had taken a break after completing *SMB3*. For over a year, all they did was experiment with the technical limits of the prospective hardware, seeing just how far they could push it. Without having got to grips with the technology, they were suddenly given the task of creating a game that would make the SNES launch a global success. Considering that today *Super Mario World* is loved internationally, it shows they certainly achieved what they set out to do. The game radiated fantastic non-linear design from start to finish and still managed to pull off several new graphical tricks, such as rotation of large objects.

ON THE SHELVES

History was made in November 1990 when the Super Famicom launched in Japan via the now famous Operation Midnight Shipping, which Nintendo implemented to stop the Japanese mafia hijacking shipments. It sold for ¥32,000 (roughly £160) and came without games, though *Super Mario World* and *F-Zero* could be bought separately.

It would be nearly another year before the system hit the US in

WHY I ❤ MY SNES

Does it make me a bad man that I was always a SNES boy instead of a MegaDrive owner? I'd certainly hope not – although as my first real console (I wanted a NES, but my parents forbade it), I always was going to have love for Nintendo's little grey beauty. I suspect, however, that my mother grew to regret buying me that *SFII* SNES pack from WH Smiths; pretty soon, I was dragging her to computer fairs to buy copies of *Zelda* and *Secret Of Mana;* the fact that the art of the Dragon Punch continued to elude me equated to hours of play without any regard for her wanting to watch the television; I soon learned the joys of import gaming and saw nothing wrong with spending £70 of her money on a copy of *SFII Turbo.* No wonder she doesn't speak to me any more…

MARTIN MATHERS





▲ Despite coming with US-style pads, these timed arcade systems have been spotted in a few places around the UK.

September 1991, where things were significantly more low key. While the Japanese design resembled a beefier version of the original Famicom, the American version underwent a cosmetic remodelling that altered its appearance while the internal hardware remained unchanged. Under the orders of Arakawa, designers created a hideous design more akin to the chunky NES for the US market. While Japanese cartridges didn't fit in the machine the insides were identical meaning, that after slight modification games from both regions could be played.

Another seven months would pass before the SNES finally appeared in the UK. With this, the 16-bit war was truly underway. The exterior design had reverted back to the Japanese model, while the innards had additional security to stop non-European titles being played. The wait was so long, in fact, that, coupled with the weaker dollar and ease of modification, many UK gamers chose to import. *Super Play*, regarded as the finest SNES magazine ever, often championed the importing cause by highlighting the weaknesses of the UK model. Delayed release dates, slowdown and massive borders were things that no European gamer appreciated.

People often criticise the PAL machine, which is unfair. Although the Japanese hardware was supported over the years with a variety of strange add-ons, including a satellite download system, internet modem and the 'Sufami Turbo' by Bandai, all of them are now virtually useless and even back in the day added nothing exciting to what was already available.

The only Japan-exclusive add-on worthy of note is the officially supported Multi-Media Station that allowed any title to be downloaded onto a reusable cartridge, enabling you to affordably acquire games. Otherwise, the best hardware creations – such as the Super Game Boy – made it to Europe. Fans will be interested to know that some companies released unofficial SNES adapters that enabled the machine to play NES games.

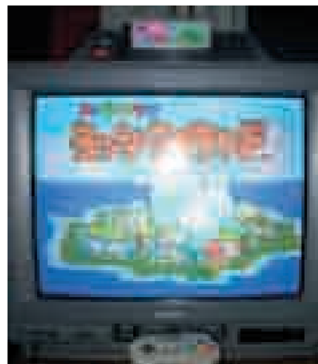


▲ The famous SNES Satellite system, which received only a small selection of exclusive games.



▲ You needed this controller to use the Japanese SNES modem, which is now useless.
▶ An officially licensed combined Super Famicom/TV hybrid system.
▼ The infamous Super Wild Card, which enabled the playing of back-up games.





RULE BRITANNIA

Nintendo never forgot about the UK. It pushed the marketing with timed pay-per-play SNES arcade systems such as the Nintendo Super System, which were available in select places around the UK though strangely came with US-style control pads. For around 50p you'd get five minutes to play on the initial launch titles and others such as *Super Tennis*. Later, Nintendo made similar machines that contained the British-made classic *Donkey Kong Country*, which were

"THE WAIT FOR THE SNES WAS SO LONG THAT MANY UK GAMERS IMPORTED"

free to play, as anyone who used cross-channel ferries during the Nineties will attest.

It was also the British who Nintendo turned to when it asked Argonaut to develop the SFX chip. Since the SNES CPU lacked the power to quickly process polygons, an additional chip was needed. Classics like *Starwing* and eventually *Yoshi's Island* would not have been possible without UK technology. And no-one should forget that the UK also received certain exclusive games that our US cousins didn't. They may have had *Final Fantasy III*, but we had equally enjoyable titles such as *Terranigma* and *The Firemen*.

With its final battle cry in the late Nineties, the SNES underwent a redesign in other territories to make it cheaper and more compact. The UK never received this, although its usefulness is debatable.

Now is a great time to discover the system as you can buy it cheaply, spend ten minutes modding it to play games full screen, and then enjoy a vast wealth of exceptional UK classics at bargain prices. To highlight the legacy of this classic system, it's even possible to acquire unofficial SNES flash carts, so there's no excuse not to relive those 16-bit days.

STANDING OUT FROM THE CROWD

There were many landmark products released for the SNES. We take a brief look at some of things that made it worth buying and ask ourselves, do they still hold up today?



MORTAL KOMBAT II: The game that infamously made Nintendo change its ridiculous content restrictions, it was the first Western Nintendo game to feature uncensored digital gore. The gameplay is extremely simplistic in light of recent brawlers such as the *Capcom Vs SNK* series, but at only a couple of quid there are worse games to play multiplayer with mates over the weekend.



STARWING: The first game to feature the UK-developed SFX chip, and arguably the title that led to other classics. Despite its poor frame rate and occasional jerkiness, not to mention it being technologically superseded by *Lylat Wars*, many still proclaim *Starwing*'s greatness and regard it as the best in the series, especially compared to modern updates that only tarnish the name.



SUPER GAME BOY: Though revolutionary back in the day, and something that breathed new life into the Game Boy's back catalogue, it has now been made totally redundant thanks to the GameCube version that also plays GBC and GBA games.

CLASH OF THE TITANS

B•O•M•B J•A•C•K

As gaming infiltrated the home market a new breed of gamer evolved. Dubbed the 'fanboy', he associated himself with a certain genre, machine or even developer or publisher, and then ridiculed all that opposed him. First recorded in playgrounds in the early Eighties, typical arguments revolved around who had the better machine, or which game looked best on which format. We aim to put a stop to years of squabbling by finding the definitive versions of some classic titles. This month it's the 8-bit computer conversions of the excellent *Bomb Jack*.

ROUND 1: VISUALS

COMMODORE 64: The C64 version of *Bomb Jack* easily captures the exuberant spirit of the arcade original. The sprites are nice and chunky, there's a selection of well-drawn backgrounds and everything remains faithful to the original iteration. Overall, a great success.

SPECTRUM: Even though it features some rather sinister looking sprites, we're still very impressed with this Spectrum conversion. The monochrome sprites lack the striking impact of their arcade counterparts, but the backgrounds are of a high quality and the sprites easily stand out against them.

AMSTRAD: It's the first round and the Amstrad already finds itself trailing behind its 8-bit brothers. While it features some colourful sprites, it lacks the detail of the Spectrum game and can't hope to match the larger-than-life character sprites of the Commodore 64 version. The backgrounds are also rather poor meaning that the Amstrad immediately drops down to third place. Not a good start for Alan Sugar's machine.

WINNER: COMMODORE 64
RUNNER UP: SPECTRUM

ROUND 2: AUDIO

COMMODORE 64: While the C64 wins this round by default (it's the only version to have any music) it was still a tough decision to make. Despite featuring tunes on the title screen and during the game, neither really tests the C64's sound chip. Luckily, some boisterous spot effects manage to make up for the annoying music.

SPECTRUM: We weren't really expecting too much from the Spectrum – so we weren't disappointed. There's no music of any description and the spot effects consist of little more than white noise. Amazingly, though, they still sound better than the crummy Amstrad effort meaning that the Sinclair once again bags second place.

AMSTRAD: Good God, what's going on here? Not only is there no music of any sort, the spot effects used throughout sound atrocious. Quite why the Amstrad coders couldn't manage even decent sound effects is anyone's guess, but the CPC now finds itself heading for the wooden spoon.

WINNER: COMMODORE 64
RUNNER UP: SPECTRUM

ROUND 3: GAMEPLAY

COMMODORE 64: It may impress aesthetically, but *Bomb Jack* on the C64 is a pig to play – this is mainly due to the oversized sprites that have been used. Jack certainly looks nice, but his sheer size makes it stupidly hard for him to avoid enemies; as a result, it's practically impossible to pull off intricate moves and the game loses serious respect.

SPECTRUM: In a word – perfect; in two – bloody brilliant. Thanks to some extremely tight controls, Jack is an absolute doddle to control and the reasonable size of all the sprites means he can squeeze into all sorts of tight situations. There's the odd bit of duff collision detection every now and then but this is still a masterful effort.

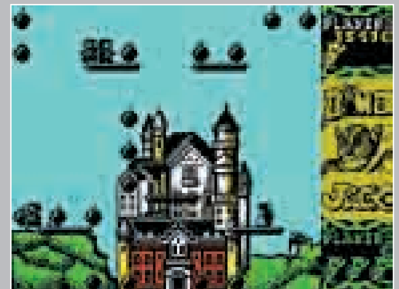
AMSTRAD: While it's not as good as the Spectrum outing, it still runs circles around the pathetic C64 effort. It's easy enough to avoid the many enemies, but we did seem to notice a few more collision problems. The Amstrad slightly redeems itself, but it still manages to slump into third place overall.

WINNER: SPECTRUM
RUNNER UP: AMSTRAD

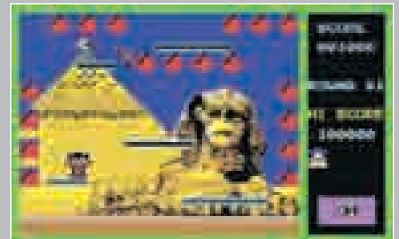
AND THE WINNER IS...

SPECTRUM

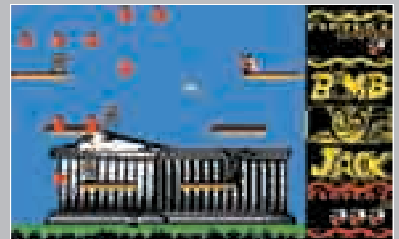
"Fix!" we hear you cry. While it's true that the C64 did win two of the three rounds, there's no excusing its abominable gameplay. While not exactly the underdog, the Spectrum proves that it's possible to combine decent aesthetics with superb gameplay to nab that all-important win.



Three cheers for the Spectrum (above) and its superior game.



Not-quite-dire gameplay can't save the Amstrad version (below).



CRASH

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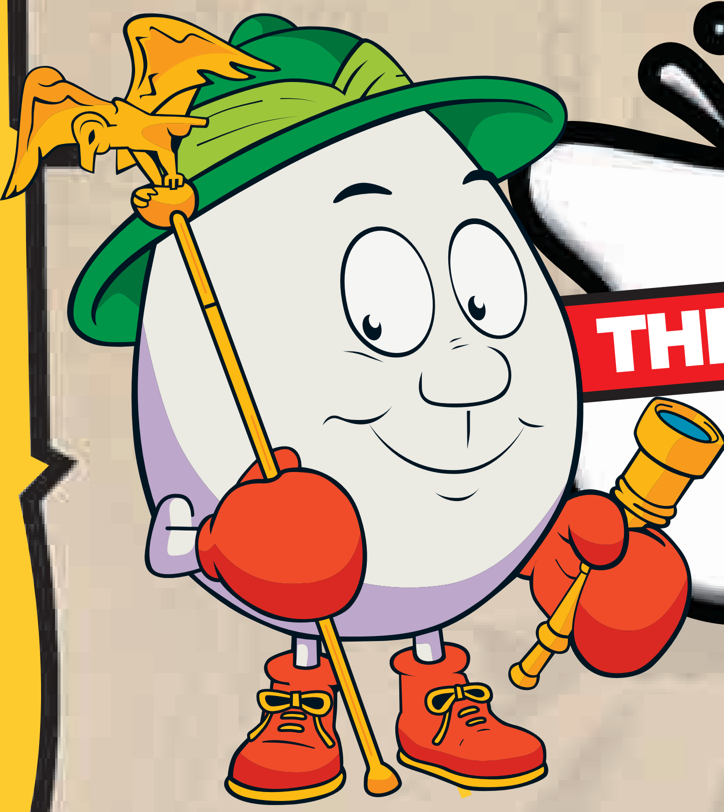
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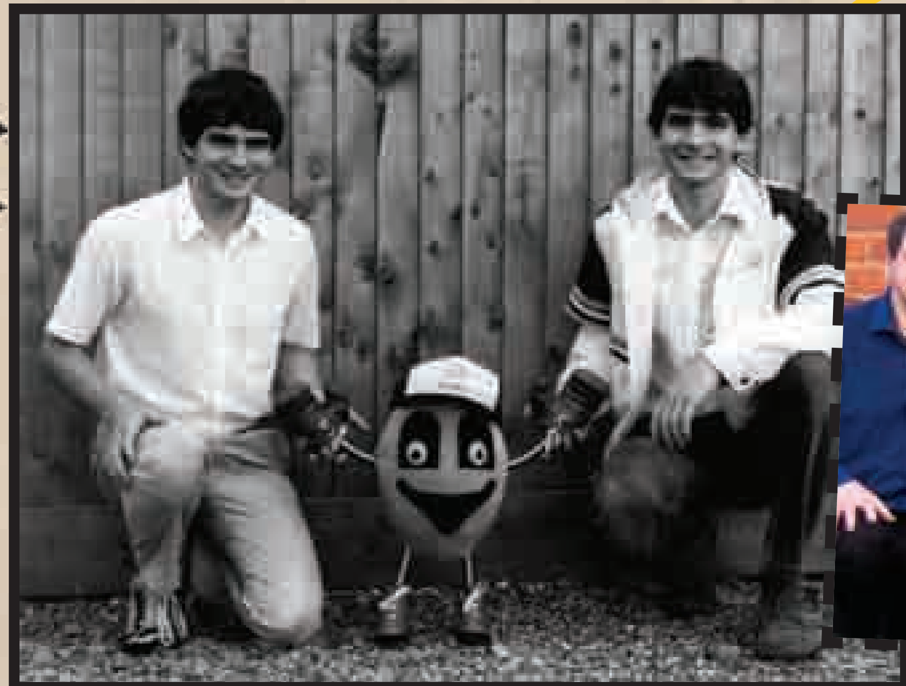
CRASH MAIL ORDER, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB

BOMB JACK (Various Home Systems) Elite, 1986 – Crash Magazine promotion



THE ORIGINAL GOOD EGG

Since he somersaulted onto our screens in 1987, Dizzy has retained a loyal fan base and starred in a host of hugely popular games. The intrepid egg had a variety of adventures and arcade games that saw him visiting Magicland, getting stranded on Treasure Island and even trying his gloves at white water rafting. Retro looks back at Dizzy's illustrious past and learns all about him from his creators, Philip and Andrew Oliver.



▲ The youthful Oliver twins with a frankly terrifying early incarnation of Dizzy. Now, that's Philip on the left, no, Andrew, no, wait…

It was the summer of 1980 when 12-year-old twins Andrew and Philip Oliver had their first brush with videogames. Holidaying in Cornwall the two brothers were exploring a local arcade and were lost in a cacophony of alien yet comforting sounds. Pushing their way past several fruit machines and Penny Falls the brothers found themselves in front of a *Pac-Man* cabinet. "We were standing there looking at this amazing machine when a guy came along, put some money into the machine and offered to let us play it," recalls Philip. "He obviously realised how keen we were to play it and we really enjoyed it. If only we'd had more money to waste on games…"

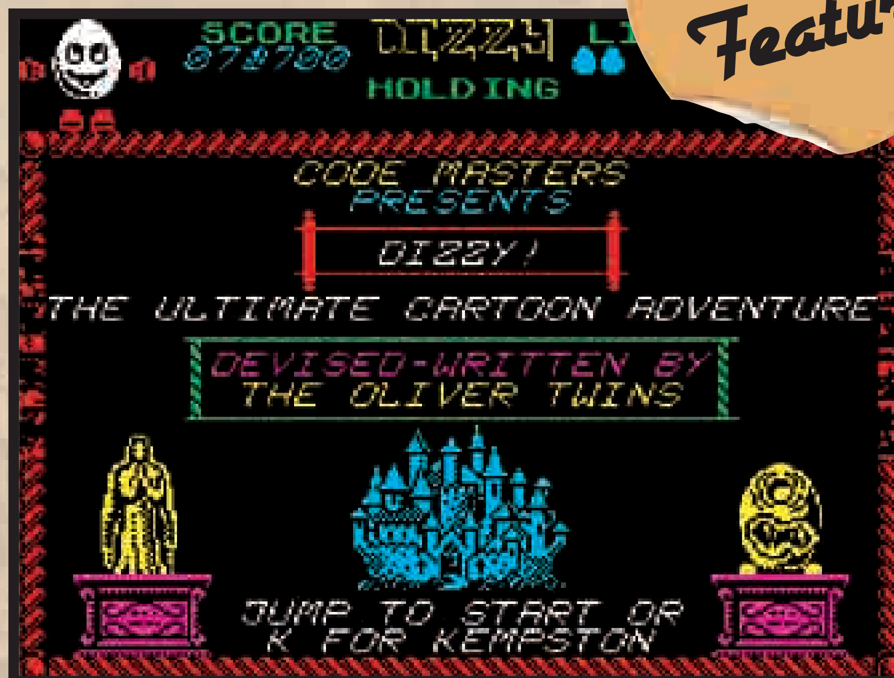
Despite the twins' lack of cash they found ingenious ways to continue their new-found interest back home in Birkenhead. After hooking up



▲ Today's Oliver twins with a suitably modernised and less child-scaring Dizzy. That's Andrew on the left, no, Philip, no, hang on…

Retro Feature

▼ The screen that launched a thousand scratched heads and puzzled expressions…



with one of their friends whose dad happened to own an Apple 2E they were soon playing the likes of *Pinball*, *Monsters* and, of course, *Pac-Man* for as long as humanly possible. A year later the brothers had progressed to the ZX81, which took pride of place under the family TV. While the machine belonged to their older brother, the twins got to keep it for themselves most of the time ("he never really used it as he'd just discovered girls," explains Philip). Totally absorbed by the machine, Philip and Andrew were soon putting together their own variants of *Pong*.

But while the ZX81 proved to be a capable starting block the twins realised that they'd need something more powerful. "We quickly decided that we needed something with more memory and colour, so in 1982 we saved up and purchased a Dragon 32," begins Philip. "Six months after that we once again upgraded and bought a BBC Model B, the computer we eventually ended up releasing our first tiles on."

The Oliver twins' first success came with a humble home-made program entitled *Strategy*. The twins had entered their game in a competition on the BBC's *The Saturday Show* and ended up winning first prize. Acornsoft, a leading publisher at the time, re-named the game *Gambit* and released it commercially. Spurred on by their success the brothers threw themselves into their new hobby. "Getting published really encouraged us to work every hour that was possible, which, admittedly, got completely in the way of our school work," recalls Andrew. "Luckily, we were always well received by publishers because we'd had a game already published, even though it probably only sold around 50 copies."

The boys had arrived and a chance encounter with fellow developer siblings the Darling brothers at the 1985 ECTS show marked the start of a relationship that would continue for another eight years. "They [Richard and David Darling] had had great success by writing games for Mastertronic, but now wanted to go it alone," says Andrew. "They had a small stand at the show to promote their new company, Codemasters, and what impressed us was that the directors were programmers themselves who understood what it took to write a game. Anyway, Codemasters was impressed by our games and asked us to work on *Super Robin Hood*. When they estimated royalties at around £10,000 it became something we couldn't turn down."

ENTER THE HERO

With just one computer to share between them the twins were programming for 23 hours a day, allowing themselves two half-hour breaks in order for the machine to cool down. Sharing gruelling 18-hour shifts, the brothers took turns, with one coding on paper while the other used the computer. The heavy workload paid off, though, as *Super Robin Hood* became their first number-one hit. While the brothers initially used an ▶

"GETTING PUBLISHED ENCOURAGED US TO WORK ALL HOURS – WHICH GOT IN THE WAY OF OUR SCHOOL WORK"



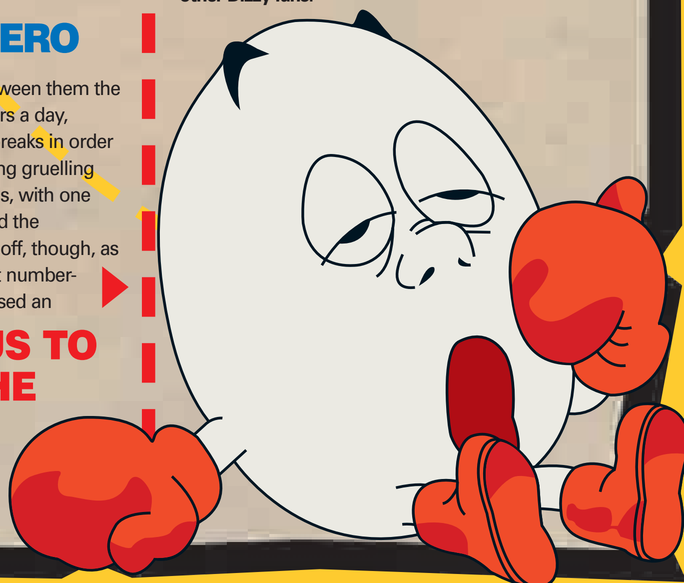
BIGGEST FANS EVER?

Have you met Dizzy's remarkable followers?

While Dizzy's adventures drew to a close a long time ago, they still carry on in an unofficial capacity. Head on over to the excellent www.yolkfolk.com and as well as finding one of the greatest dedicated shrines to Dizzy, you'll also find an impressive amount of fan-created games.

Like the official games they range from sprawling adventures to quirky puzzle titles and clearly show just how much admiration the Oliver twins' creation has gathered. While the brothers are well aware of both the site and the games, they don't get to dedicate as much time to them as they'd like.

"It's very complimentary that fans have gone out there and tried to create their own Dizzy games and we feel honoured by that," says Philip. "Unfortunately, there simply aren't enough hours in the day to go and play them all and give feedback. While there are some great Dizzy sites available, we're particularly impressed with yolkfolk.com. There are a lot of updates, it tries to be a portal to other sites and is not derogatory to other Dizzy fans."



THE ORIGINAL GOOD EGG

Amstrad, Codemasters soon sent them a Spectrum and asked them to start converting games for it. Before long, *Ghost Hunters* and *Grand Prix Simulator* followed (the latter saw Codemasters receive a legal notice from Activision due to its similarities to Atari's *Super Sprint*) and went straight to the top of the charts.

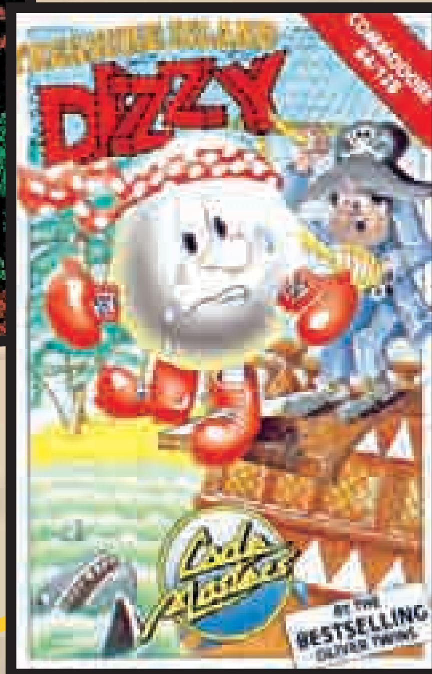
Eager to return to the formula that had served them so well in *Super Robin Hood*, but annoyed with Robin's lack of identity (they only had a 3x3-pixel grid to create his face) the brothers began to experiment…

"One morning we were just playing around with how big we could get a face on screen, but that obviously meant not giving it a body," explains Philip. "We ended up drawing the biggest face we could and simply added arms and legs to it so it actually held together and you could run it around the screen. It only took a morning to complete all the animations but it's still something I vividly remember." Now they had their character up and running – well, cartwheeling, really, as it was easier than animating walking on their new graphics package – and named (Dizzy) it was simply a case of deciding what sort of game *Dizzy* would be.

"With *Dizzy* we wanted to create an interactive cartoon, so we needed other characters and it needed to be an interesting world," says Philip. "We realised that if we used references from classic stories such as fairy tales we could create a compelling and original world that would also be familiar in some way for the player. We also wanted to use these ideas in a way that would create some more unusual gameplay elements instead of the standard 'find key to open door' type of dynamic."



▲ *Treasure Island Dizzy* was a massive hit on the back of the first game's rave reviews and word of mouth.



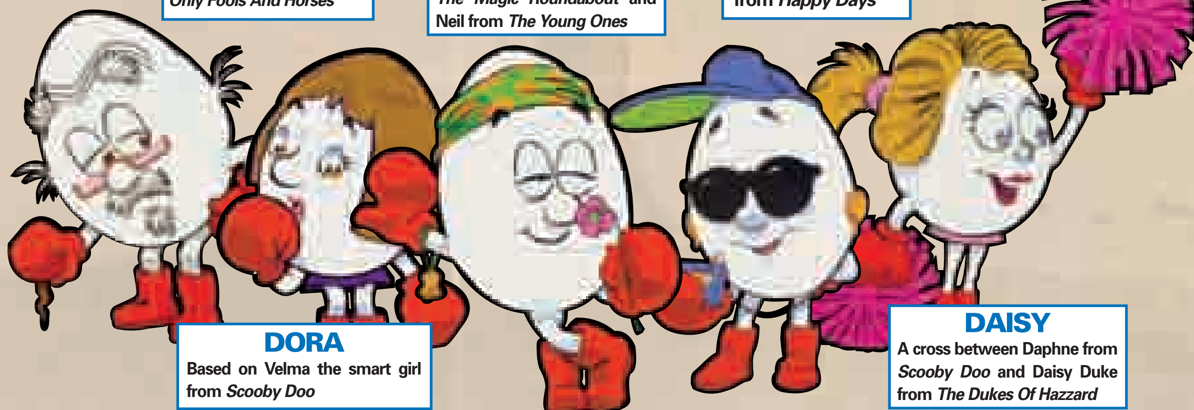
After two months of hard graft *Dizzy* was finished and ready to be thrust on an unsuspecting public. While the brothers felt that *Dizzy* was a great achievement, it didn't enjoy the success that Andrew and Philip expected. In part, Philip felt that this was down to a lack of familiarity with the subject matter. "People knew the premise of *Robin Hood*," he says. "They knew the premise, they knew Robin Hood; it was one of those free licences that everyone knows about. With *Dizzy*, though, nobody was quite sure what it was so sales were quite slow, but the feedback was incredibly positive and we received an awful lot of fan letters from Codemasters." As a result the twins did something that would be practically impossible in today's market – they created a sequel not because of incredible sales, but because it was what the fans wanted.

Treasure Island Dizzy was completed in less than a month and released 14 months after the original game. Whereas *Dizzy* took around six months to reach the magic 100,000 units sales mark *Treasure Island Dizzy* achieved and exceeded the same figure in a matter of weeks and, predictably, went straight to number one. Unsurprisingly, the brothers have their own theory as to why the Island-based sequel became so popular so quickly. "We believe that everyone who had bought the first *Dizzy* game liked it so much that the minute they saw another one, they went straight down the shops to buy it," muses Andrew. "As a result of this huge surge, it went straight to number one and those people who hadn't learnt of *Dizzy* saw it was at the top of the charts and purchased it on that recommendation."

MEET THE FAMILY…

The Yolk Folk in the Olivers' words

We'd already introduced enemies and wanted to introduce some friendly characters to the series," explains Philip when asked about the arrival of Dizzy's friends in *Fantasy World Dizzy*. "One of the original inspirations was the Smurfs, as they had their little village and family and friends, so we wanted to create something very similar. We decided a diverse spread of characters was needed, so we came up with the following…"



GRAND DIZZY
Inspired by Grandad in *Only Fools And Horses*

DYLAN
A cross between the rabbit in *The Magic Roundabout* and Neil from *The Young Ones*

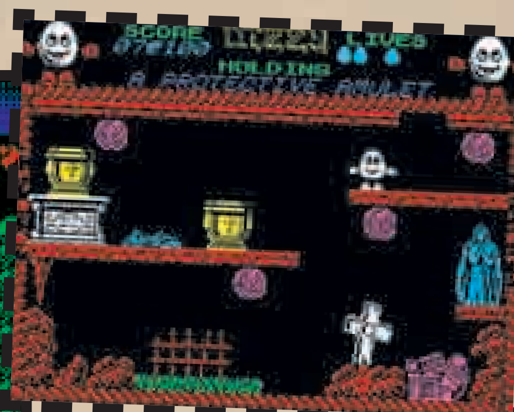
DENZEL
Inspired by The Fonz from *Happy Days*

DORA
Based on Velma the smart girl from *Scooby Doo*

DAISY
A cross between Daphne from *Scooby Doo* and Daisy Duke from *The Dukes Of Hazzard*



▲ Various members of Dizzy's family debuted in *Fantasy World Dizzy* to offer our hero some advice on his epic(ish) quest.





DIZZY BRANCHES OUT

It was November 1987 and with the twins' friends having packed their bags and left for university, the brothers found themselves at a loose end. When the Darlings jokingly suggested that the brothers should make another *Dizzy* game in time for Christmas as it would sell at least 100,000 copies, the Olivers took them up on their offer.

"We realised how long it took to write an adventure game, and thought we wouldn't be able to get that out in time," recalls Philip. "However, we were still avid fans of *Pac-Man* and used to joke how that game must have been written really quickly. We spent a whole weekend working on a simple, fun maze-based game that would make the projected release date. By Monday morning (and having had no sleep all weekend) we were practically finished. A graphics artist improved the graphics a little and we got a musician to do some sound effects for us. *Fast Food* was pretty much completed by the end of the week."

Although *Fast Food* managed to debut in time for Christmas it never sold as well as the previous adventure titles. The brothers attribute this to the game's quick turnaround time and admit that it lacks the creativity of the adventure games. However, they had no problems releasing similar puzzle games and knew that Dizzy was the reason for their success. "Once you've got something as successful as *Dizzy* and a huge, ever-growing fan base it became obvious that we could sell twice as many copies of any cool new game idea if Dizzy was in it," admits Philip. "By including him in most of our new games it just helped make them all the more successful."

Knowing that the next Dizzy game would need to be another adventure, the brothers took a break by working on the likes of *Grand Prix Simulator 2*, charity title *The Race Against Time* and *Jet Bike Simulator* (the first of Codemasters' slightly more expensive Plus range). By the autumn of 1988 the brothers were ready to start work on *Fantasy World Dizzy* and introduced a selection of new characters called the Yolk Folk.

Despite their name, however, they and Dizzy aren't actually eggs – or so the twins claim. "He's simply the largest face we could actually move around a screen," says Andrew. "We were trying to show real expression in the character so that people were engaged by him; needless to say, we felt the face was important." Regardless of what they actually were, the introduction of the Yolk Folk proved a masterstroke by the twins and gave the franchise a depth that had been missing from previous titles. Dizzy could now interact more with non-player characters and they added a new dimension to the ever-growing series.

Perhaps the most notable thing about *Fantasy World Dizzy*, though, is that it became a success before anyone at Codemasters had even seen it. "Back in those days, Codemasters was only an operation of about six people – most of those were Darling family members – and we weren't local to them, so as a result we tended to just write what we wanted to write and posted it in," begins Philip. "It's quite interesting that *Fantasy World Dizzy* was actually fully duplicated, on sale and a number-one seller before anybody at Codemasters had actually loaded the tape up to see what it was. There was such a high level of trust between us and the Darlings that this wasn't uncommon, and we were all working 18-hour days anyway so it's quite likely that no-one had found the time to load it up!"

> "WITH THE DIZZY GAMES WE WANTED TO CREATE AN INTERACTIVE CARTOON"

Codemasters had nothing to worry about as *Fantasy World Dizzy* was a great improvement on its predecessors and proved a massive hit with reviewers and fans. After working on *Ghostbusters II* for Activision and *Operation Gunship* for Codemasters, the brothers decided it was time for another Dizzy game and came up with the excellent *Kwik Snax*, a superb puzzler that remains Dizzy's best venture outside of his traditional adventure titles.

CALLING IN THE CONTRACTORS

With new consoles coming onto the market, Codemasters was eager to break into the lucrative US NES market (at the time, the system had over 20 million sales compared to 1 million for the Spectrum) and quickly had the brothers get a conversion of *Treasure Island Dizzy* ready to show off at the 1990 CES trade show. After the demo



A WELL-ROUNDED EGG?

There's been a three-dimensional demo, but will we ever see a 3D Dizzy?

In this age of tarting up old games for new consoles, we asked the Oliver twins about the possibility of Dizzy making a fully fledged 3D comeback. A three-dimensional Dizzy has already appeared in a teaser trailer on www.fantasticdizzy.com, but Philip Oliver is quick to point out that it doesn't necessarily mean there's a new game in the works. "The fans were really excited, thinking it was an actual game already in development, but we only wanted to see what people thought of the idea," he says.

While some Dizzy followers have embraced the new, rounded Dizzy, we'll admit to being rather more sceptical. That said, Philip admits that if the series is resurrected – which would most likely happen on the Game Boy Advance – three dimensions may be the way to go. "All the characters from that retro period have made the transition to 3D and we always thought Dizzy would be no different if he was to return," he says. "It gives you so much more scope for the gameplay and the environments."

So is this 3D adventure ever likely to happen? "Never say never," says Philip enigmatically…

received great interest, Codemasters decided to release new versions of *Fantasy World Dizzy* and *Grand Prix Simulator*. However, it also wanted to keep releasing titles for the home computers, so after some deliberation the twins decided to contract out *Magicland Dizzy* to Big Red Software so they could continue work on the new NES titles.

"There simply weren't enough hours in the day for us to write all the games we wanted to," says Andrew. "We were very friendly with Big Red Software (who, incidentally, we now employ most of) and had a lot of respect for the work that they were doing on their games. Between us we worked out a rough storyline and were very happy with the game that they produced. They then worked on *Dizzy Prince Of The Yolk Folk* which they designed almost entirely on their own and we were exceptionally pleased because it really captured the full essence of what *Dizzy* was trying to achieve. In some ways it did this better than our own games had done up to that point."

The Big Red Software titles proved popular and the studio went on to develop the substandard *Panic Dizzy!* and the excellent *Seymour* titles that have more than a few *Dizzy* similarities. Last but by no means least was the decent but flawed (it was much too big) *Spellbound Dizzy*; but despite its problems it proved one of the most successful *Dizzy* titles and was a fitting end to Big Red Software's partnership with the twins.

While the home computer versions of Dizzy were proving immensely popular the twins were finding working on the NES (and later the Master System, Mega Drive and Game Gear) a completely different proposition… "The transition to consoles was hugely difficult for us," admits Philip. "We had been producing games incredibly quickly but as we moved onto console we were now up against games like *Mario* and, later, *Sonic The Hedgehog*. This meant that games took an awful lot longer to produce, the quality of the graphics had to be higher and overnight we found the games were taking ten times as long to write. On consoles people wanted more on-screen movement and faster action rather than actual thinking. This is one of the reasons why the first *Sonic* was so hugely successful as [Sonic Team] tapped into fast action-based gameplay. Obviously, Dizzy was not well suited to this and that was probably why the *Dizzy* games finally declined in popularity – people wanted more action games."

While *The Fantastic Adventures Of Dizzy* did prove popular, it never achieved the sort of sales that the twins had hoped for. They predicted the game would sell over half a million units but the figure was nearer to 125,000. In part this could have been due to the fact that an ongoing legal battle with Nintendo and Codemasters over the Game Genie meant that the game missed the lucrative Christmas holidays and ended up getting released the following April. Dizzy was starting to wane in popularity, but for the fans, the biggest insult had yet to arrive…

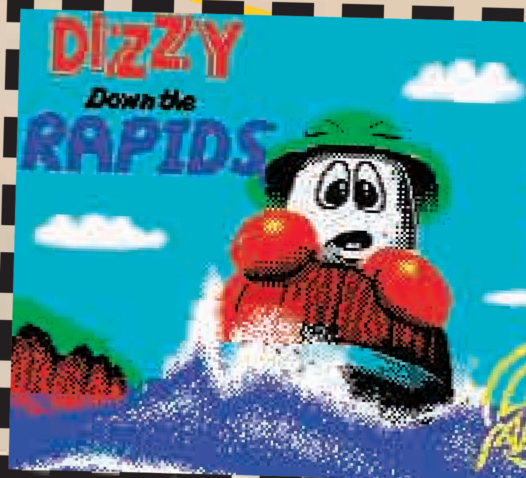
A NEW BEGINNING?

Dizzy was slowly starting to run out of steam, and while his games continued to sell they no longer automatically reached the coveted number-one spot This wasn't due to complacency by the twins or Big Red Software, gamers simply seemed to be growing less excited by Dizzy's continuing adventures and arcade games. *Dizzy Down The Rapids* (which started life as a mini-game in *The Fantastic Adventures Of Dizzy*) was a typical example and impressed few critics or gamers. *Bubble Dizzy* also divided audiences and even its unique conception wasn't enough to save it. "We got the idea of *Bubble Dizzy* from just watching the bubbles in a lemonade glass and sitting there thinking about how they would go up and then burst, only to be taken over by another one," reveals Andrew. "We thought we could make that idea into some interesting gameplay. We were also inspired by the excellent C64 title *Nebulus* and wanted to create something similar but with a different angle."

With Christmas once again approaching, Codemasters decided that it wanted another Dizzy game for the home market. Though *Spellbound Dizzy* had proved popular, Codemasters wasn't happy with the price it has sold for and intended to change this for Dizzy's next outing. "Codemasters was concerned that there was relatively little profit compared with how successful *Spellbound Dizzy* had been," explains Philip. "Unfortunately, the jump from £2.99 to £10.99 was huge, mainly because there were no mid-price points available. As a result the game was made to be more polished, higher quality and produced in a large box and supported by a good marketing campaign. It was not unusual for games of this quality to go out at £9.99; therefore, we saw no adverse reaction to it. I think up until then, the Dizzy fan base had been very pleased with what value for money they were receiving on the previous games. By the time we got to *Crystal Kingdom Dizzy*, they just accepted that we were now the same price as everyone else."

Despite the brothers' claims, *Crystal Kingdom Dizzy* didn't prove that popular with fans, and they saw through the cheap extras that Codemasters

"THERE SIMPLY WEREN'T ENOUGH HOURS IN THE DAY FOR US TO WRITE ALL THE GAMES WE WANTED TO"





▲ You can't go far wrong with the *Dizzy Collection* if you've still got an Amiga lying around – three awsome adventures and a couple of puzzlers.

had bundled with the game in order to justify the much higher price.

By this point, the strain was beginning to show between the twins and Codemasters and their final few games hit several problems. The brothers decided to port several of the NES titles over to Sega's Game Gear and Master System as they would be fairly easy and cost effective to convert. As production continued the twins' relationship with Codemasters soured and they decided to cancel *Dreamworld Pogie* (one of the planned titles) when several staff left and the Olivers were unable to replace them.

Work continued but faced further problems when Codemasters' marketing department explained that none of the titles would receive separate releases. With little choice in the matter, the brothers bundled the remaining planned games (*Wonderland Dizzy*, *Go! Dizzy Go!* and *Dizzy The Adventurer*) onto one compilation. But even this proved problematic as Codemasters stated that it didn't want two adventure titles on the new compilation. *Wonderland Dizzy* was dropped and the brothers quickly converted *Panic Dizzy!* to replace it. With the twins losing staff and being forced to live off their wives' earnings they decided to break away from Codemasters and form their own company.

CUTTING-EGG GAMES

Sadly, the production of future *Dizzy* games on later consoles and computers no longer proved to be financially viable (a big difference to when *Treasure Island Dizzy* was made), and with Codemasters and the twins both owning a fifty-fifty share on the Dizzy IP no more games were released. Fortunately, this may change in the future, although as Philip points out, it's going to need to be a very good game.

"We do have discussions with Codemasters every now and then about resurrecting Dizzy, and we've even done a few art tests in recent years [check out www.fantasticdizzy.co.uk], but neither company wants to revive him just for the sake of it. Both companies have established good reputations for creating a huge variety of great new games that are arguably better than Dizzy ever was, so if he were ever to make another appearance it would have to be something special."

Despite having no firm plans for Dizzy's future, the twins are more than happy with the support he continues to get. "The demand to bring Dizzy back continues to be very gratifying and we know from the many emails we receive and the people that apply to work for us that Dizzy inspired a lot of people to get into the games industry," confirms Andrew. "With Dizzy, though, you have to realise that there's a big difference between people's fond childhood memories and the quality of top-selling character games today. If he came back he would have to compete with the likes of *Jak And Daxter* and *Ratchet & Clank* – and those types of games require big budgets and many months of development. If there's a publisher willing to commit to that kind of investment, though, then they can definitely count us in. There's also been a lot of interest in people wanting to play the original Dizzy games on some of the handheld formats recently so maybe he'll make a new appearance on mobile phones. We'll have to wait and see."

If Dizzy does ever return, the brothers know exactly what type of game he would appear in and have already envisaged his next adventure. "We feel that the *Shrek* movies completely captured the personality, storyline and imagery we had always dreamt of but were unable to achieve with the technology at the time," reveals Philip. "If we ever get to make a new Dizzy game, that's exactly the sort of direction that we'd like to take him in."

For the moment, though, the twins are simply happy that Dizzy continues to exist in gamers' hearts and are pleased with the success that he's achieved. "We think – and we may be wrong – that it's because Dizzy conjured up a great deal of imagination in people's minds that was very unusual at the time," says Philip. "Clearly with the technology that we had we were only scratching the surface to tell the story and introduce the characters, but people's imaginations were sparked and they were able to fill in the gaps, a little bit like the way people read an awful lot more into books, and the imagery that they conjure up in their minds is often far more impressive than when Hollywood makes a movie of that same book."

Regardless of whether Dizzy returns or not, it's obvious that both the Oliver twins and his legions of fans still have a lot of love for the exploring egg and will continue to support him in the future.





▲ *Go! Dizzy Go!* was one of several puzzle-based Dizzy titles, none of which surpassed his adventure games.



FAMILY TREE

He may not have appeared in a game for over 12 years, but Dizzy's popularity is showing no signs of abating. Originally created by the Oliver Twins in 1987, Dizzy quickly built up a cult following and became one of the most well-known videogame characters on the 8-bit computers (he's appeared in more Spectrum games than any other character). As his games grew in popularity, Dizzy left his adventuring roots in order to appear in a variety of arcade-style games (which were often nowhere near as good as his original adventures) and quickly moved over to the more powerful 16-bit computers. Just when it looked like Dizzy would successfully cross over to the more lucrative console market, a falling out between the Oliver Twins and publisher Codemasters meant that several games were never finished and Dizzy's fabulous adventures came to an abrupt end.

DIZZY



- 1986
- 8-bit computers
- This is where it all started. Ambitiously dubbed 'The Ultimate Cartoon Adventure', the original *Dizzy* laid some ambitious groundwork for future games to build upon. Puzzles were never too taxing, the game itself nipped along at a fair old pace and Dizzy himself looked wonderfully endearing (considering the limitations of the 8-bit home computers). Although some of the collision detection was rather ropey (causing many unnecessary deaths), the bouncy tune, simple yet effective level design and tight controls still hold up today. Not Dizzy's greatest adventure by any means, but it was a cut above similar titles of the time.

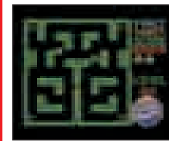
TREASURE ISLAND DIZZY



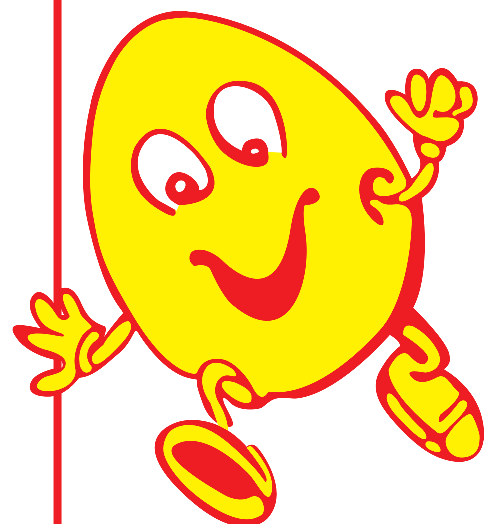
- 1987
- Various home systems
- From the cheery (though distorted) digitised speech at the beginning of Dizzy's second outing, it was obvious that the Oliver Twins had been listening to the egg's ever-growing fanbase. Not content with delivering a wonderful toe-tapping tune and improved visuals, *Treasure Island Dizzy* also saw you having to collect 30 fiendishly hidden gold coins (this collecting element would later become a series staple). While the ability to carry around three items at any one time was a great addition to the game, whoever decided to give Dizzy just the one (oh-so-easily lost) life gained the heartfelt enmity of fans everywhere.

ARCADE-STYLE

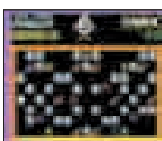
FAST FOOD



- 1987
- Various Home Systems
- Dizzy may have been rather good at adventuring, but when he was moved into other genres he usually had less success. *Fast Food* was the first non-standard Dizzy game to get released and was a poor *Pac-Man* rip-off that did little to improve on Namco's original classic coin-op. Many of its power-ups were completely pointless and added little value to the overall gameplay, while a complete lack of AI meant that the game was extremely easy to beat and quickly became monotonous. Definitely one to avoid, especially if you were unfortunate enough to hear the mind-numbing music. And Dizzy didn't even look much like Dizzy…



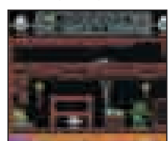
KWIK SNAX



- 1989
- Various Home Systems
- Unlike *Fast Food*, the Oliver Twins got everything right with *Kwik Snax* and it remains the best puzzle-based *Dizzy* game. Trapped in a single-screen maze, Dizzy had to avoid enemies by pushing blocks around and collecting each level's quota of fruit. Collecting fruit in a specific order let you score more points (like the bombs in *Bomb Jack*) and it was even possible to kill enemies by crushing them against walls or between blocks. Tight controls, reasonable visuals and some jaunty tunes all added to the experience and proved that Dizzy could cross genres if he did it well. Stay away from the C64 version, though, as it plays more like *Fast Food*.

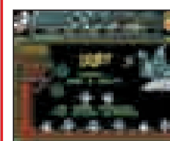
PUZZLES

FANTASY WORLD DIZZY



- 1988
- Various Home Systems
- This was where Dizzy came of age. The inclusion of his relatives added some much-needed depth to the franchise and injected plenty of humour into an already great game. Lots of text was used during the adventure, but rather than hinder progress it improved proceedings and added a storybook quality that made Dizzy's 'Ultimate Cartoon Adventure' claim much more accurate. Add a refined menu that allowed you to choose when and where you could drop objects (though you could only carry two items) along with a massive game world and it's little wonder that *Fantasy World Dizzy* is hailed as one of the egg's greatest games.

DIZZY: THREE AND A HALF



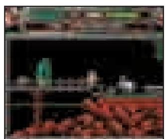
- 1990
- Spectrum
- Cover tapes were commonplace on many magazines in the Eighties and early Nineties and developers would often fill them with special one-offs starring popular characters like Monty Mole. *Dizzy: Three And A Half* was a five-screen adventure that was given away free with the Christmas edition of *Crash* magazine and saw Dizzy having to rescue his cousin Danny before reaching the entrance to Magicland. It was a brief taster of the forthcoming fourth Dizzy adventure (hence the *Three And A Half* moniker) as well as the third *Crash* tape to feature the Oliver Twins' creation. It also remains the only Dizzy game to feature Danny.

DIZZY PANIC!



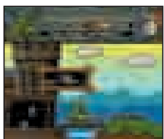
- 1990
- Various Home and Handheld Systems
- While Dizzy's adventures continued to get better, things weren't so good for his puzzle titles, with *Dizzy Panic!* being a prime example. It's yet another dull gaming experience and an extremely poor *Tetris* rip-off. Random shapes continually fell from four pipes and Dizzy had to match them up with identical holes that appeared in a movable conveyer belt. If you tried to drop a shape through the wrong hole the pipes lowered until it was game over. *Dizzy Panic!* may have boasted some nice presentation, but sluggish controls and unfair gameplay meant that this eggy outing proved to be more frustrating than challenging.

MAGICLAND DIZZY



- 1990
- Various Home Systems
- *Magicland Dizzy* was the first Dizzy adventure that the Oliver Twins contracted out to Big Red Software and it proved a very wise move. While *Magicland* was as surreal as any of Dizzy's other adventures, the constant references to classic tales and fables meant that Dizzy's fourth outing was easy to relate to. Trying to wake a sleeping Dozy (who had eaten Snow White's poisoned apple) and sussing out how to retrieve Excalibur worked wonderfully and created some superb puzzles in the process. Add a much-needed energy bar – which stopped many of those annoying instant deaths – and Big Red Software ended up with a deserved hit.

DIZZY: PRINCE OF THE YOLK FOLK



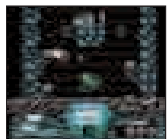
- 1991
- Various Home Systems
- *Prince Of The Yolk Folk* originally appeared as part of the superb *Dizzy's Excellent Adventures* compilation, but proved so popular that it eventually received a separate release. While there's nothing wrong with the core gameplay, *Prince Of The Yolk Folk's* small size – it was only around 30 screens – meant that it took no time at all to complete and it came across as little more than filler (this was fine as part of a compilation, but a little cheeky for a standalone release). Once again created by Big Red Software, *Prince Of The Yolk Folk* proved to be yet another enjoyable – if short – Dizzy escapade.

SPELLBOUND DIZZY



- 1990
- Various Home Systems
- At its time of release *Spellbound Dizzy* was the biggest adventure that the little egg had been in and featured over 100 screens of classic Dizzy action. While there was certainly a lot to do, *Spellbound Dizzy*'s sheer size meant that there was a lot of needless backtracking and it didn't appear to have the same appeal that had been apparent in so many of Dizzy's previous adventures (who could forget the constant trips to The Sandstone Quarry?). Still, *Dizzy* fans lapped it up – particularly enjoying Dizzy's funky new animations – and *Spellbound Dizzy* was another hit for Big Red Software, Codemasters and the Oliver Twins.

BUBBLE DIZZY



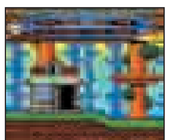
- 1990
- Various Home Systems
- He'd only been around for four years but Dizzy's popularity meant that he started to appear in any old tat. *Bubble Dizzy* was another poor arcade title and saw the boxing glove-wearing hero trying to reach the top of each screen before the time ran out and he drowned. Fortunately, there were plenty of bubbles that Dizzy could hitch a ride on and the monotony was broken by having to pick up the occasional pearl. Sadly, naff controls and frustrating gameplay (curse those bursting bubbles) means that playing *Bubble Dizzy* today isn't a pleasant experience. Bizarrely, the NES version, which was a mini-game in *The Fantastic Adventures Of Dizzy*, was much better.

THE FANTASTIC ADVENTURES OF DIZZY



- 1991
- Various Home and Handheld Systems
- Although Dizzy's first NES game was finished in 1990, Codemasters' legal battle with Nintendo over its Game Genie meant *The Fantastic Adventures Of Dizzy* wasn't released until April 1991. The delay was worth it, though, as it remains one of the best Dizzy games (it combined all the best ideas from the previous titles) and proved that Dizzy could hold his own in the console market. He even found his way onto the Master System and Game Gear, and while he was never going to give Mario a run for his money, it was obvious that he could work on the newer systems. If only his adventures had continued on the Game Boy…

CRYSTAL KINGDOM DIZZY

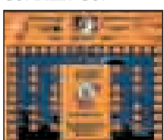


- 1991
- Various Home Systems
- With all the previous 8-bit Dizzy games retailing for £1.99 (ah, the good old days) gamers were enraged when Codemasters expected them to shell out (pun intended) a whopping £10 for *Crystal Kingdom Dizzy*. While a development period of nine months meant that there was plenty of Dizzy action to enjoy, fans still felt short-changed. Even a free poster and stickers did little to convince fans that this was nothing more than another shameless cash-in – it was even released just in time for Christmas. Still, it certainly looked nice (especially on the 8-bit systems) and loyal fans dutifully lapped it up, so Codemasters won in the end anyway.

DIZZY DOWN THE RAPIDS

- 1991
- Various Home Systems
- What happens when you cross *Dizzy* with *Toobin*? You get an absolute abomination of a game that cynically cashes in on Dizzy's vast success. Like *Bubble Dizzy*, *Dizzy Down The Rapids* was another sub-game that had first appeared in *The Fantastic Adventures Of Dizzy*, but this time Dizzy's white-water escapades didn't go down so well with his loyal fanbase. Horribly slow controls, some extremely iffy collision detection and dull, uninspired visuals did little to spur you on, and even though it was a budget game you still regretted wasting your pocket money. Easily the worst Dizzy game ever made.

GO! DIZZY GO!



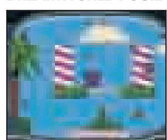
- 1992
- Various Home and Handheld Systems
- *Go! Dizzy Go!* is quite unusual as it's the only Dizzy game that's only ever been available on compilations. Originally released on the NES as part of the *Quattro Arcade Collection*, it was eventually ported over to Sega's Master System (with *Dizzy The Adventurer* and *Dizzy Panic!*) as part of *The Excellent Dizzy Collection*. Like *Dizzy The Adventurer* this is another remake and this time was based upon the excellent *Kwik Snax*. Luckily, the cute, cartoony visuals and wonderful tunes greatly added to the arcade experience, and as a result *Go! Dizzy Go!* remains a terrific Dizzy puzzle game.

DIZZY THE ADVENTURER

- 1992
- Various Home and Handheld Systems
- Dizzy's second NES outing came free with the Aladdin Deck Enhancer and, like other Codemasters titles, was published in America by Camerica. However, it wasn't a new game at all. *Dizzy The Adventurer* was basically a remake of *Prince Of The Yolk Folk*, albeit with greatly improved sound and visuals. While it didn't take very long to complete and offered nothing to anyone who had played *Prince Of The Yolk Folk*, it once again proved that Dizzy had the potential to cross over to the more lucrative console market. If only Camerica hadn't gone bust Dizzy might have stood a better chance of conquering the consoles.

NOT RELEASED

DREAMWORLD POGIE



- N/A
- N/A
- *Dreamworld Pogie* was originally going to be released for the NES, but the Oliver Twins decided to convert it to Sega's Game Gear and make it part of a new Dizzy compilation entitled *The Excellent Dizzy Collection* when it became obvious that Codemasters wouldn't release it as a full-price game. Sadly, *Dreamworld Pogie* was cancelled after several programming staff left and the twins were unable to spare anybody else to replace them. Although it managed to reach alpha phase, the game was never released and was quickly dropped from the compilation. Maybe if Dizzy has a comeback this game will reappear…

WONDERLAND DIZZY



- N/A
- N/A
- Like the ill-fated *Dreamworld Pogie*, *Wonderland Dizzy* was another in-production NES title that was to be converted to the Master System and Game Gear. Sadly, the Oliver Twins hit a brick wall when Codemasters said that it only wanted the new compilation to contain one Dizzy adventure. Running out of time, the twins dropped *Wonderland Dizzy* and instead added *Dizzy Panic!* to complete the final trilogy (which included *Go! Dizzy Go!* and *Dizzy The Adventurer*). This game was intended to have an *Alice In Wonderland* feel to it, which would have worked well with the series fairy-tale elements, so its cancellation was a real shame.

GAMES THAT TIME FORGOT



WE ATTEMPT TO REWRITE THE HISTORY BOOKS BY SALUTING THOSE CLASSIC GAMES THAT HAVE FALLEN BY THE WAYSIDE

EXTERMINATOR

LET'S HAVE A BIG HAND FOR THIS ARCADE ODDITY

You'd think that a game that saw you control a disembodied hand would be seared into the mind forever, but it's surprising how many blank stares you'll receive upon mentioning Gottlieb's ambitious coin-op *Exterminator*.

Created by a company known primarily for its pinball machines, *Exterminator* marked a number of firsts for both Gottlieb and the industry when it was released in limited numbers in 1989. For starters, it was the first arcade title that Gottlieb had worked on for seven years; it also marked a new era for the company after it was bought by Premier.

Housed in a unique cabinet, *Exterminator* was certainly an unusual looking game and an extremely rare one to boot – it's thought that only around 250 machines ever made it into arcades.

Perhaps the main aspect of the game that set it apart from other titles was that it was the first arcade game to ever use digitised graphics. Before the likes of *Pit-Fighter* and *Mortal Kombat* allowed you to square off against 'lifelike' opponents, *Exterminator* was letting you lay down all sorts of hurt on a variety of annoying animals.

Taking on the role of a pest controller, your task was to clear a row of houses of their troublesome vermin. Controlling one of the Exterminator's hands (which would eerily float about the screen) you could use it to crush, pound and generally kill anything that came near you. When things got too hectic it was possible to move to the left hand side of the screen and employ your laser finger (yes, really) to fry more pesky opponents. Care was needed, though, as you only had a limited amount of juice with which to fry your foes, although this could be increased by collecting power-ups and destroying certain items.

Once a critter had been defeated it would drop to the ground and turn a small section of the tiled floor red; when you'd created a vertical line the room was cleared and you could move onto the next area in the house.

While *Exterminator* looked impressive it became monotonous after continued play. The controls also caused problems and having to move over to the far side of the screen every time you wanted to shoot something quickly became tiresome. Luckily, another version was released that let you shoot from anywhere on the screen, but this made the game too easy and added nothing to the original gameplay.

While it never set arcades alight *Exterminator* did create a decent impression when it was released for home computers in 1991. The Amiga version looked particularly good and perfectly captured the bizarre atmosphere of its arcade parent; unsurprisingly, the 8-bit versions didn't fare quite so well on the visual front, but still proved to be competent conversions.

While the unique look and feel of the original arcade machine wasn't perfectly ported, the Amiga version at least managed to contain the excellent two-player version of the game. Players could team up or fight against each other and this mode's addition added a much-needed layer of depth to *Exterminator*'s rather dull gameplay.

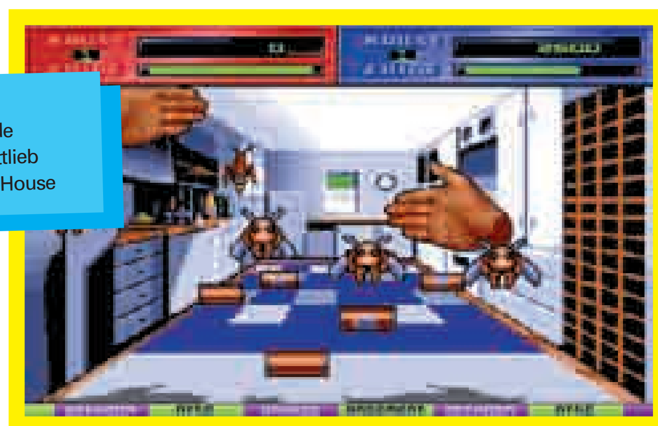
Thanks to the obscurity of the original arcade game and its general bizarreness, *Exterminator* is rarely mentioned nowadays. While it's by no means a classic game, it's an oddity that's certainly worth a few hours of your time.



▼ Add your own voice-over to create that *Life Of Grime* vibe.

Release: 1989
Format: Arcade
Publisher: Gottlieb
Developer: In-House

▼ Look at those relentlessly sinister flies. Make no mistake – those are the cold, dead eyes of a killer.



EXTERMINATOR™

Gottlieb®

Dimensions:
28" Wide
78" Height
37" Depth
278 lbs.

CAPTURE QUARTERS!

Shoot Down COMPETITION!!!

- DEDICATED 2 PLAYER.
- DEVELOPED and MANUFACTURED in the U.S.A.
- BUY IN CONTINUATION FEATURE.
- LIFE LIKE GRAPHICS.
- UNIQUE CONTROLS.
- COMPETE or CO-OPERATE (2 PLAYER).

EXTERMINATOR (Arcade) Gottlieb, 1989 – US arcade flyer

UNSUNG

As retro gaming gets more popular, it's high time that the unsung heroes who have worked so tirelessly to share their passion with others finally receive some credit. This month we find out why one man has so tirelessly championed the Spectrum and all that it stands for...

Ever since he was 13 years old Martijn van der Heide has adored all things related to Clive Sinclair's wonderful range of home computers. Ten years ago he set up the remarkably popular World of Spectrum website and it's become a haven for everything relating to the legendary 8-bit machine. It's also one of the few places on the internet that has gained permission from many companies to carry legal downloads and many old games. Retro managed to track down Martijn in order to find out more about his extraordinarily comprehensive site, which you can find at www.worldofspectrum.org



▲ This is Martijn van der Heide. He slaves away over a hot computer so you can play Spectrum games.

THE INTERVIEW

games™: Why do you like the Spectrum so much?

Martijn van der Heide: Its appeal for me was mostly being able to learn about computers on their lowest level (hardware and assembly language). I began experimenting with networking and learnt as much as I could from other programmers. Games and scene demos are also great learning material, as you can look at the code and see how their programmers pushed the limits of the hardware. An 8-bit machine might seem rather inadequate at hosting smooth arcade games, but we've often been proved wrong.

g™: What made you start up World of Spectrum?

MvdH: I first toyed with the idea in 1994 while I was at university. I'd just discovered Spectrum Forever (now Planet Sinclair) and comp.sys.Sinclair and was amazed that my beloved machine still had such an active following. Being from The Netherlands, I really believed it had been forgotten about when the last magazine had closed its doors. Anyway, I had just started programming SGD [Spectrum Games Database], so I was thrilled at the opportunity to increase the database and find new games to dissect. The web didn't really exist as of yet, and it took another year for the web servers to mature enough to allow me to take that first plunge – I'm glad I did, though.

g™: Do you have many people working on the website?

MvdH: The World of Spectrum team is a tight group of dedicated fans and continues to grow. The core maintenance crew consists of seven people: Andy Barker, Steve Brown, Tony Barnett, Juan Pablo López-Grao, Philip Kendall, Gerard Sweeney and myself, although we have several additional members on various projects.

The Preservation Team (Andy Barker, Steve Brown, Tony Barnett, Paul Hurd and Juan Pablo López-Grao) provide nearly all of the perfect tape and disk images (out of their own pocket, I should add!), and many of our beloved visitors provide inlay scans, maps, instructions, magazine scans, database corrections and other material.

g™: Can our readers help?

MvdH: Database corrections and additions are always welcome, as are instructions for games. Ideally we're after preserved tape and disk images for the games featured in the Missing In Action list and the Spectrum Tape Preservation and Spectrum Disk Preservation lists. We're also always looking out for hardware, books and magazines that aren't available on the site.

g™: What's been the best thing

▼ See that? World of Spectrum is the "official world archive" for the Speccy. That means it's pretty much an essential site for any fan of the little black box.



HEROES

Retro Feature

about running the website?
MvdH: I'm wondering whether it's the group effort or the great support we get from the industry. The copyrights project is one of the things I'm most proud of, as getting to talk to the original programmers and software houses and then working with them is a very pleasurable experience. The Spectrum community is such a lovely crowd to be in.

g™: How much of your time do you have to devote to World of Spectrum?
MvdH: I must spend an average of 30 hours per week on World of Spectrum. It can be hard work sometimes, but to be honest, I wouldn't have it any other way.

g™: Your site is famous for making many Spectrum titles free to download or play. What problems has this caused?
MvdH: I'm glad to say that there have been none so far, and we're now in our tenth year. I strongly believe this is due to the fact we're actively trying to find all copyright holders and ask them for official permission (and, of course, promptly removing files if this is denied). Combine this with the fact that no commerce is involved in any way (advertisements, pop-ups, sales or requests for monetary donations) and it makes us very different to most other emulation sites. All we want to do is completely and accurately preserve the Spectrum's legacy and its industry.

g™: Activision titles were available on your site for some time before recently being taken down. Any idea why the company changed its mind?
MvdH: I'm not convinced Activision did change its mind. We've been contacting Activision for years without ever getting any replies. We recently acquired a direct legal contact within Activision, and got 'no' for an answer, so of course everything has been taken down. Maybe it now has plans for its back catalogue. I don't really know, but the choice is Activision's to make and I am not in any position to question its decision, although I have no hard feelings about what has happened.

g™: Paul McKenna of Odin Computer Graphics recently asked for his games to be taken off World of Spectrum and it caused outrage on your forums. Has this all been cleared up?
MvdH: Yes, we're on good terms now. The reason people got upset is due to the way the 'no' was delivered. I had contacted all the individual programmers and artists (who believed the rights had gone back to them) and all were eager to allow free distribution of their older games. I never realised Mr McKenna held the rights, but working with him solved the issue amicably.

g™: Obtaining the use of game images is a legal minefield, especially when an artist gives you access to a game they don't own. How do you solve this problem?
MvdH: My policy is to accept any 'no' as definitive, whether it's from the publisher or one of the authors. We're not here to hurt the industry and we respect everyone who cares to answer our permission questions. We've contacted quite a lot of people and software houses who were thrilled to find their software preserved in the archive, several of them [had] lost all of their own copies and were able to get perfect images thanks to our preservation projects. The number of allowances far outweighs the number of refusals, otherwise we probably wouldn't be here any more. You can observe several hundred permission messages we have received in the



▲ Martin has ensured that every game on the website has the blessing of its copyright owner. Nice and legal.



Copyrights section of the site.

g™: Do you think retro gaming is a passing trend or will it continue to prosper?
MvdH: Retro has been here for a long time now, and I can't imagine it ever going away. People who know X will always want to preserve its heritage, whether it's an older system such as the 8-bits, a more recent system or something else entirely. However, if no one cares about X, it's likely to be forgotten at some point in time.

The current rage for 8-bit technology might be because we helped preserve it, but it's also easy to use on current systems due to its relative simplicity and addictive gameplay. As modern systems grow in power, more recent retro games may appear on them. Also, seeing that the current youth is brought up to enjoy our humble machines, the legacy lives on. After all, did we forget our forefathers who created important art, books or games?



Share your views about old-school gaming

Retro Contact

First Contact

If you're into retro gaming and you've got something to share with the world, why not write to us at: games™ Retro, Highbury Entertainment, Paragon House, St Peter's Road, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH1 2JS Or you can email: gamestm@paragon.co.uk

MATTER OF OPINION

Dear games™

Please stop this madness you're obviously succumbing to. *Castlevania 64* is not a rubbish game by any stretch of the imagination. I read through the entire article that was printed in issue 30 and couldn't believe what I was reading. Granted, it's not the best game in the series, but I do think that you've been overly harsh on what is obviously a classic game. In fact, I'd go as far as to say that I actually prefer it to *Symphony Of The Night*.

Dean Pointan

Sorry, but like many franchises, *Castlevania* is typical of a series that has yet to fully find its feet in the third dimension. To us, *Symphony Of The Night* is still the pinnacle of the series and will remain the benchmark by which all future *Castlevania* games will be judged.

YOU LOOK FAMILIAR

Dear games™

I'm confused. A few years ago I completed the rather excellent *Exhumed* on the PSone. I recently bought *Shadow Madness* and, while not as good, it has offered some entertainment.

At the beginning of disc two you have to pilot an underwater vessel and the section feels entirely different from the rest of the game. I noticed immediately the rather startling similarities between this particular section and *Exhumed*. The sound effects, weapons, pick-ups are all identical and even the camel grunt that you hear when touching a camel in *Exhumed* appears when you reach the exit sign in *Shadow Madness*.

I don't think either game was developed by the same company so is this complete laziness on behalf or Crave or just a simple coincidence?

Andrew Sale

We have to admit we're stumped by this too. We're not sure if anyone at Lobotomy Software worked on *Exhumed*, but there are an eerie number of similarities between the two games. Perhaps someone who worked on either title could get in touch…



Better than *Symphony Of The Night*? Seriously? We don't think so…

YOU LEAVE SFII ALONE!

Dear games™

I think you were harsh to say that *Street Fighter II* on the Mega Drive was clunky and hasn't aged very well ['The Complete Package', issue 31]. I still play it myself and really enjoy it. However, I do agree that to charge £30 for two games is a waste of time when you can buy a Mega Drive and several games for the same price.

I also believe you're a little confused about the release of *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike*. You've mentioned twice now that the game was released in 1997, but it was actually 1999 (the original *Street Fighter III: New Generation* was released in 1997).

I really enjoy the Retro section and was wondering if you had ever thought of writing a feature on beta versions of games. A really popular one is the *Sonic 2* beta with the Hidden Palace and Wood Zones – check out Simon Wai's site at www.sws2b.com.

One last thing: I bought the retro collection book you did, which was great, and would like to know if you plan to release another volume.

Michael Walmsley

We stand by our opinions on *Street Fighter II* but we will hold our hands up to the *3rd Strike* release date mistake. The beta feature is a nice idea and has plenty of potential, so it's something we'll definitely consider. As for a second issue of the Retro book, well, you'll just have to wait and see.

WHO'S THE DADDY?

Dear games™

First, I'd like to say that I'm a huge fan of your magazine. I guess I'm one of the few people in the US who gets **games™**, but for some reason my college book store sells it and it blows away every other gaming magazine I've ever read. Even though it costs about twice as much as a normal magazine, I still shell out the $10 for all the cool articles.



Yes, we got the release date wrong. Doesn't stop *SFIII* being awesome.



STAR LETTER

Dear games™
Retro is without doubt my favourite part of your magazine. But why? You see, I once thought it would be a good idea to resurrect my old favourites on my dusty CPC464: *Who Dares Wins, Football Manager, Gauntlet* and many others. Oh dear. Computer games rarely improve with age. The repetitive gameplay, rubbish graphics and laughable sound did nothing to recreate how I felt about these games when I first played them and since then my motto has always been to let sleeping games lie.



So why do I love your Retro section so much? Well, your recent article on *Combat School* summed it up for me. I was reading the article with mild interest (I'd long forgotten having even played the game) when something clicked. It wasn't until you mentioned one person having to work the joystick while another had to jump with the space bar that it happened. This little snippet was just enough to unlock a door in my mind, allowing all these happy little memories to come rushing out, causing me to shout, "Yes! I remember doing that".

Ah, that's why I love Retro: warm, fuzzy nostalgia from a lost age of simple innocence. Pathetic? Perhaps. But hey, it works for me.
Owain Bevan

Welcome back to the retro fold, Owain. We're celebrating the occasion by awarding you a retro game of your choice. Good work, that man.

My favourite part of the mag is your excellent Retro section as it covers many games and systems that didn't always appear in the US. Upon reading the Retro section in issue 30, I came across Garron Tungate's 'Ultimate Collection', and while I'd never insult a fellow collector or shmups fan, I was sort of surprised by how measly his collection was.

I know everything is more expensive in the UK, but besides the PC Engine LT there isn't much of note in Garron's collection. I consider myself to be a mid-level collector, and even my collection blows his away [Chris lists various systems and games – Ed] and that's maybe just 80 per cent of what I own. So as you can see my collection is superior in every way.
Chris Collet

Garron's collection is actually very impressive despite what it may have looked like in the magazine. With space limited to under a page there's not much room for images, so collections look smaller than they are. We try to show the best parts of a collection but sometimes we don't do them justice. Still, you're not the first person to say that the Ultimate Collection feature isn't always up to scratch, so it'll be getting a revamp soon.



Hey, nothing's too hardcore for this Retro section. Even the SuperGrafx.

KIDD A

Dear games™
In issue 30 I noticed a letter mentioning the excellent Alex Kidd. Since *Alex Kidd In Miracle World* is one of my favourite retro games, I was wondering if we could see more coverage about him in future issues of the mag?

I also think that some games like *Mario Bros* are getting way too much recognition. I'm not going to suggest that Alex Kidd is better (except maybe in my point of view) but I do think that he was a victim of the low userbase of the Master System (or maybe it was because he just wasn't as loved as Mario.)

Finally, I'd like to see more coverage of less well-known titles such as *Granzort* for the SuperGrafx – or am I being too hardcore for you? I understand that games like this only appeal to a small percentage of most retro gamers and collectors, but it would still be nice to see them included in the mag.
Dany Braeckman

To be honest, we were never huge fans of Alex Kidd and always felt that his games were lacking. While Mario is more popular, we'd say that it's mainly because many of his games are just as good to play now as they where when first released. We're not too sure if the same applies to most Alex Kidd games, though you've got to love *Alex Kidd In Shinobi World*.

Retro

C·L·A·S·S·I·C C·O·N·S·O·L·E

BUYERS' GUIDE QUICK REFERENCE

BUYERS' GUIDE

It might be easy to play retro games through emulation, but there's nothing quite like owning the original system – that musty smell of ancient electronics can never really be replicated with a PC. Of course, there's always a price to pay and unscrupulous dealers are out to make a quick buck, but you really don't have to pay through the nose if you look in the right places. Charity shops, car boot sales and eBay are all good places to start, but before you do, use our guide to see how much you should be paying…

3DO

Panasonic 3DO	£60
Goldstar 3DO	£50-60



ACORN COMPUTERS

BBC Micro	£50
Acorn Electron	£40

AMSTRAD

Amstrad CPC 464	£10-20
Amstrad CPC 664	£20-25
Amstrad CPC 6128	£25
Amstrad GX4000	£15-40

ATARI

Atari VCS 2600	£30 (wooden models tend to cost more)
Atari ST	£40 (with software)
Atari Lynx	£15
Atari Jaguar	£20-30

COMMODORE

Commodore VIC-20	£15-20
Commodore 64	£25-35 (depending on model)
Commodore Amiga	£35-40 (depending on model)
Commodore CDTV	£50-60
C64GS	£50 (becoming more sought-after)
Commodore CD32	£35

MISC

GCE Vectrex (General Consumer Electronics)	£50-250
MB Vectrex (Milton Bradley)	£175-200
JAMMA compatible cabinets	£100-350 (depending on model)
Supergun	£150-200 (depending on model)

NEC

PC Engine	£60-90
Turbo Grafx-16	£50-60
Turbo Duo	£115-220
PC Engine GT	£80-180
Super Grafx	£200-300





NINTENDO

Game & Watch	£15-150 (depending on title)
Nintendo Entertainment System	£15-20
Game Boy/Game Boy Pocket	£10
Game Boy Color	£15
Super Nintendo	£20-40
Virtual Boy	£75-100
Nintendo 64	£20-25

SEGA

Master System	£20-30
Mega Drive	£20-25
Game Gear	£10-25
Mega CD	£40-60
Sega 32X	£30
Sega Nomad	£75-150
Saturn	£20-35 (depending on model)
Dreamcast	£20-40

SINCLAIR

Sinclair ZX-81	£40
ZX Spectrum 48K	£40-50
ZX Spectrum +	£30
ZX Spectrum 128K	£40
ZX Spectrum +2	£35
ZX Spectrum +3	£40

SNK

Neo-Geo MVS Single Slot (arcade system)	£70 (prices for multi-slots are higher)
Neo-Geo AES (home system)	£175-225
Neo-Geo CD	£125-175
Neo-Geo CDZ	£150-175
Neo-Geo Pocket Color	£30-50



Right then, you've just picked up a second-hand console and are looking for some classic games to play on it. The only problem is, you're not too sure what to buy. Hopefully, we can help.

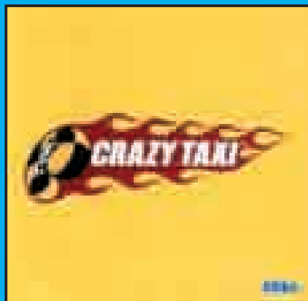
Every month we'll be printing the current range of prices for a selection of classic games for a particular system. Of course, this is subject to change, so don't be surprised if you manage to get one for less (or, unfortunately, more). This month we're taking a look at essential PAL Dreamcast titles.

Crazy Taxi

Estimated Price: £4-10

Developer: Amusement Vision

Crazy Taxi was typical of the solid arcade conversions that made it to Sega's criminally underrated 128-bit machine. Vibrant visuals, worryingly addictive gameplay and a slew of impressive extras ensured it became an instant hit when first released. Forget the lacklustre PS2 and GameCube versions (and even the so-so sequels, for that matter) – the original is still the best. It's also very easy to get hold of, so don't expect to pay any more than a tenner.



Soul Calibur

Estimated Price: £5-15

Developer: Namco

It's easy to forget just how big an impact Namco's fighter had when it appeared on the Dreamcast. Looking absolutely breathtaking (especially via VGA) *Soul Calibur* remains a superb three-dimensional fighter and was no doubt responsible for selling a fair few Dreamcasts when it was released. Featuring surprisingly deep gameplay, superb modes and those awesome visuals, *Soul Calibur*'s pocket-friendly price makes it an essential purchase for any collector.



Rez

Estimated Price: £25-50

Developer: UGA

It's easy to dismiss *Rez* as another on-rails shooter, but to do so is missing the point. The brainchild of Tetsuya Mizuguchi (who went on to create the excellent *Meteos* and *Lumines*) *Rez* is a hypnotic blend of sound and visuals that provides an unrivalled immersive experience. While the better frame rate and in-built rumble makes the PS2 a more obvious choice, the extremely limited print of the Dreamcast version makes it more collectable.

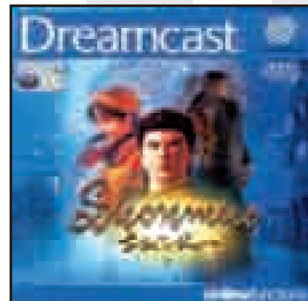


Shenmue

Estimated Price: £15-25

Developer: AM2

Yes, we know that Yu Suzuki's ambitious sequel is miles better, but anyone new to the Dreamcast is going to want to begin Ryu's captivating story from the beginning. Coming in a lavish two-case set (expect to pay extra if it still has its cardboard sleeve), *Shenmue* is a game that's loved and loathed in equal measures. Regardless of your opinion about it, though, there's no denying that this game definitely needs to be experienced.



Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike

Estimated Price: £10-25

Developer: Capcom

We'll be the first to admit that we just didn't get *3rd Strike* when it was first released. The parrying system seemed completely hit and miss, hardly any of the new characters appealed to us and it just appeared too damned complicated. Now, though, it all makes perfect sense and it's not only the best fighter on the Dreamcast (and there were a few) but probably the best 2D fighter ever made. Snap it up on Dreamcast if you don't have Xbox Live.

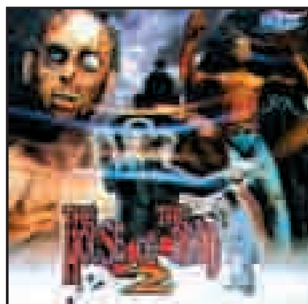


The House Of The Dead 2

Estimated Price: £8-40 (with gun)

Developer: AM2

Shooting zombies is great. Don't believe us? Then give Sega's superb undead sequel a quick workout. We'll forgive the laughable voice acting and the game's paltry length, as it was filled with fantastic visuals, masses of extras and, of course, lots of zombies. While the game itself can be picked up relatively cheaply a boxed version with a lightgun usually retails for a much higher price – and let's face it, it's much better fun with a couple of guns.



Skies Of Arcadia

Estimated Price: £20-35

Developer: Sega Overworks

The Dreamcast had very few decent RPGs, so it's little wonder that the adventures of Vyse and co proved so popular. Not content with delivering an epic storyline, rich, believable characters and a fantastic battle system, *Skies Of Arcadia* ultimately impressed with its breathtaking world; a sky paradise filled with flying ships, exotic floating islands and menacing Gigas. It tends to reach high prices on eBay but hunting around should find a copy for a reasonable price.



Samba De Amigo

Estimated Price: £10-100 (with maracas)

Developer: Sonic Team

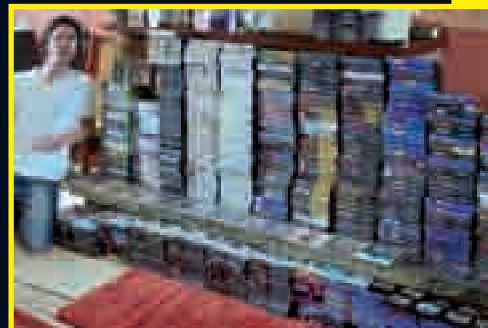
Don't gawp – that price is accurate, especially when sold with an immaculate set of maracas. You don't need them, of course, but if you haven't got them, *Samba De Amigo* becomes half the game it should be. Think *Dance Dance Revolution* for the top half of your body; wave your arms around, hit the markers as they appear on screen and generally work up a sweat to some crazy mambo beats. Now if only Sega made a version for the Xbox…



THE ULTIMATE COLLECTION


Now that's what we call comprehensive. Still a few gaps, mind – perhaps the rug wasn't big enough.


That's a top collection of games, but how's Father Christmas going to get in now the chimney's blocked?



SEGA GAMES HAVE APPEALED TO MANY OF OUR ULTIMATE COLLECTORS, AND 24-YEAR-OLD SIMON STALLWOOD IS NO DIFFERENT. THE ESSEX-BASED BATHROOM DESIGNER HAS BEEN COLLECTING GAMES FOR OVER 12 YEARS AND HAS A SPECIAL PLACE IN HIS HEART FOR ANYTHING SEGA-RELATED.

Q: How long have you been collecting?

A: Since 1992, which is when I received my Sega Master System. I got absolutely hooked on Sega games and it was the start of a passion that so far has shown no signs of diminishing. I did have a ZX Spectrum before the Master System, but like an idiot I sold it to raise funds for the next system. It's something I've never done since and I'm just glad that emulation now exists on the internet.

Q: How much is your collection worth?

A: Much more once I finally get around to buying a Neo-Geo. Seriously though, I'm not too sure about it's actual worth. I'd imagine it's around the £6-7,000. Have a look and make up your own mind – there's quite a lot there.

Q: How did your interest in collecting come about?

A: Funnily enough, I never set out to be a collector. I simply found that I couldn't bring myself to sell any of my games and before I knew it I had started a shrine to Sega. Of course, I have plenty of non-Sega games, but the Japanese publisher definitely means the most to me.

Q: What's your most prized possession?

A: It has to be my JAMMA coin-op. I've got PCBs of *The New Zealand Story*, *Bad Dudes Vs Dragon Ninja*, *Caveman Ninja*, *Street Smart*, *WWF Wrestle Fest* and *Rolling Thunder 2*. While the machine itself is in amazingly good condition, it's let down by the fact the new 50 pence pieces won't work on it.

Q: What's the most money you've spent on a single item?

A: I bought a mint *Steel Battalion* that had never been played and was still in plastic for £290 about a year and half ago. Granted, the price has gone down quite a bit now, but most of the used ones that crop up nowadays tend to be the second editions that were released when *Steel Battalion: Line Of Contact* came out. Overall, I'm happy with the price I paid.

Q: Have you ever found a real bargain?

A: I bought my JAMMA 26-inch screen coin-op with four games (*New Zealand Story*, *Rolling Thunder 2*, *Joe & Mac: Caveman Ninja* and *Bad Dudes Vs Dragon Ninja*) for a bargain £200. That also included the delivery charge and someone carrying it into my room – definitely the best bargain I've ever had.

Q: What does your significant other and family think of your collecting?

A: Well, I actually lost a girlfriend back in 1999 because *Sonic Adventure* had just come out on Dreamcast and I was unable to put it down. She left me because I was prepared to spend more time with Sonic then I did with her. On the plus side, I managed to complete the game with all 120 Emblems and ever since then all the other girls I've been out with have been fine. As for my family they're totally cool about my collecting and my dad even buys Mega Drive games for me when he's at car boot sales. My *Halo 2* clan, the Groove Warriors, are also very supportive and will often let me know of any bargains they've stumbled across.



NEXT MONTH IN RETRO

Time presses on but the Retro section looks ever backwards, and next month we'll be getting into the circuits of another classic gaming machine. We'll also find out why *Paperboy* may be the greatest game ever…

See you then!

ON SALE 14 JULY 2005


eMag

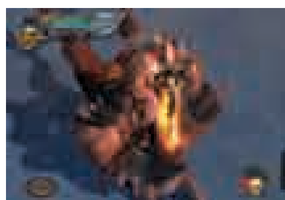
ESSENTIALS

TOO MANY GAMES, NOT ENOUGH MONEY. THANKFULLY, NOT ALL OF THEM ARE WORTH SPENDING YOUR HARD-

gamesTM VIEWPOINT

GOD OF WAR

Yes, we were as surprised as you that *God Of War* turned out to be as great as it was – after all, coming from the developer behind *Twisted Metal* isn't much to boast about. But it is great and deserves to be nestled deep within your collection.



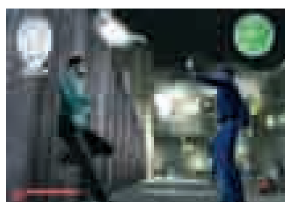
MONSTER HUNTER

Extra, extra – Capcom finally comes good with online promises. No doubt *Monster Hunter* would be half the game without its *PSO*-style online bits, so for that we must say hurrah. Here's hoping *Resident Evil Outbreak 2* is just as playable.



NARC

Yes, we still love retro games and have an interest in any remakes of old titles that come out. No, we didn't review *NARC*. Yes, there's a perfectly valid reason that should be obvious by now. And no, you don't want to know our opinion of it – it's probably not printable.





PLAYSTATION2

Manufacturer Sony
UK Launch Date
24 November 2000
Media
4.75-inch DVD Disc
Current Price £104.99

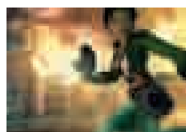
The oldest of the next-generation consoles, having had well over a year's head start over both the GameCube and Xbox. Thanks to Sony's reputation, though, it's still the most popular console around – a trend that will no doubt continue now that the remodelled, one-quarter-size PStwo is available in both traditional black and 'special' silver.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE PLAYSTATION2 GAMES

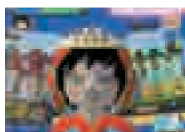
Title	Publisher	Developer	Comment
Amplitude	Sony	Harmonix	Music games have never needed as much skill as this
Beyond Good & Evil	Ubisoft	In-House	A fine example of adventuring; well worth the wait
Burnout 3: Takedown	EA Games	Criterion Studios	EA takes the arcade racing genre to new heights
Dark Chronicle	Sony	In-House	In-depth RPGs don't come much bigger than this
Devil May Cry 3	Capcom	In-House	Hard as nails but certainly the highlight of the series
Disgaea: Hour Of Darkness	Atlus	Nippon Ichi	Like your RPGs practically endless? Then this is for you
God Of War	Sony	In-House	Sony's answer to *Devil May Cry* is a godly delight
Gran Turismo 4	Sony	Polyphony Digital	Worth the wait, thankfully – even without the online mode
Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas	Rockstar Games	Rockstar North	Bigger, badder, better – a great *GTA* experience
Gregory Horror Show	Capcom	In-House	Bizarre, twisted and yet oh-so enjoyable
Gitaroo Man	THQ	Koei	The genuine thing of rhythm-action beauty
Hitman: Contracts	Eidos	Io Interactive	Silent but deadly – a real killer of a game
Ico	SCEE	In-House	Possibly the most beautiful game ever made
Katamari Damacy IMPORT	Namco	In-House	One of the quirkiest action puzzle games around
Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater	Konami	In-House	Flawed genius, but genius nevertheless
Prince Of Persia: Sands Of Time	Ubisoft	In-House	The original still reigns for style and substance.
Rez	Sega	UGA	Deceptively simple – draws you in before you know it
SSX 3	Electronic Arts	EA Sports BIG	The *Tony Hawk's* of the snowboarding world
Tony Hawk's Underground 2	Activision	Neversoft	Better? Again? How does Neversoft keep doing it?
Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution	Sega	In-House	By far the deepest 3D fighting game around today

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN...

Beyond Good & Evil
■ How this didn't end up being one of the most popular PS2 games when it came out is the real crime here.



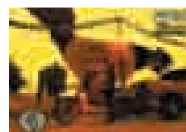
Gitaroo Man
■ Those who know good games know *Gitaroo Man* – it's just a shame you can't get it for love nor money.



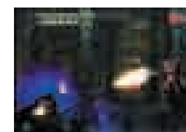
MGS3: Snake Eater
■ As confusing and complex a story as they come, but still a great piece of gaming despite its awkward problems.



GTA: San Andreas
■ There's nothing to boast about now the Xbox version is available, but that doesn't stop this being hugely playable.



Devil May Cry 3
■ The right move for Capcom – stop being so moody and make Dante the ass-kicking hellion he once was. Great.









EARNED CASH ON. IF YOU WANT TO TASTE THE CREAM OF THE CROP, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE



XBOX

Manufacturer Microsoft
UK Launch Date
13 March 2002
Media
4.75-inch DVD Disc
Current Price £99.99

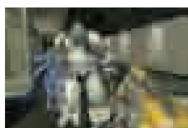
Despite a slow start, the Xbox has swiftly become one of the major players in today's console market. Suggestions that the machine is only 'a PC in a box' are founded, although the Xbox is far more accessible to gamers than most PCs. Despite the upcoming Xbox 360, Microsoft has pledged to support the console until at least 2007.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE XBOX GAMES

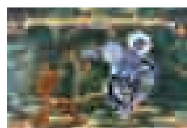
Title	Publisher	Developer	Comment
Burnout 3: Takedown	EA Games	Criterion Studios	The game that redefines the arcade racing genre
Chronicles Of Riddick: Butcher Bay	Vivendi Universal	Starbreeze Studios	A fine example of great gameplay and top-notch graphics
Def Jam: Fight For New York	Electronic Arts	Aki Corporation	Ultra-violent fighting has never looked so good
Deus Ex: Invisible War	Eidos	Ion Storm	Freestyle adventuring with a decent first-person twist
Fable	Microsoft	Big Blue Box	A special breed of RPG – well worth experiencing
Forza Motorsport	Microsoft	In-House	No *GT4* comparisons – just a solid Xbox racing game
Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas	Rockstar Games	Rockstar North	And about time too – a better version in almost every way
Jet Set Radio Future	Sega	Smilebit	Cel-shading at its very best and a soundtrack to die for
Knights Of The Old Republic	Activision	BioWare	One of the best *Star Wars* games ever made
Ninja Gaiden	Microsoft	Tecmo	Damn tough, but a great example of style and gameplay
Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath	Electronic Arts	Oddworld Inhabitants	A complete change of pace for *Oddworld* that really works
Out Run 2	Sega	Sumo Digital	Stunning reproduction of a great arcade game
Pro Evolution Soccer 4	Konami	In-House	The only football game worth owning, period.
Project Zero	Microsoft	Tecmo	Scarier than anything else out there today
Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	Midway	In-House	An enjoyable and solid psychic blasting romp
Rainbow Six 3: Black Arrow	Ubisoft	In-House	An essential update to the hugely popular Live game
RalliSport Challenge 2	Microsoft	Digital Illusions	Does everything you'd want from a rally game and more
Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory	Ubisoft	In-House	The best Splinter Cell yet, thanks to the co-op mode
Street Fighter Anniversary Collection	Capcom	In-House	The greatest collection of fighting games ever? Oh, hell yes
TimeSplitters: Future Perfect	Electronic Arts	Free Radical	An infinitely expanding universe of online blasting action

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN…

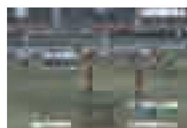
TimeSplitters: Future Perfect
Or 'a less broken *Halo 2* as someone recently described Free Radical's online shooter while we happily played…



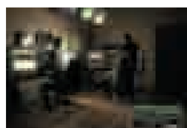
Street Fighter Collection
Still the number-one game in our office – nothing else gets a look in, unless you're hankering for some *VF* action.



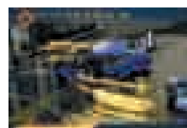
Pro Evolution Soccer 4
Better than the PS2 version. There, we've said it. And don't argue about it; you just know that we're right.



Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory
The same old *Splinter Cell*? Well, nearly – if it wasn't for the Co-op mode we'd be tempted to suggest otherwise.



Burnout 3: Takedown
We know plenty of people who can't stand the EA styling of *Burnout 3*. On the other hand, we happen to love it.

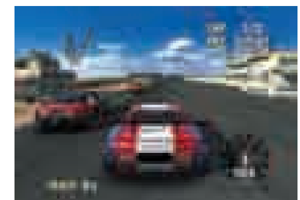


gamesTM VIEWPOINT

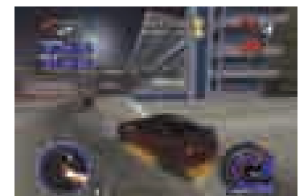
JADE EMPIRE
Certainly, BioWare's latest effort takes a bit of getting used to, particularly in the combat department. That said, we can't help but marvel at how beautiful the whole thing looks – that, and how much there is to see and do within it.



FORZA MOTORSPORT
Despite the many comparisons to *Gran Turismo 4*, it's hardly fair to pit the two against each other – not unless you've got both formats, of course. For Xbox-only gamers who love racing, it's a given, particularly with the Live-related action.



JUICED
And to think that Acclaim's death nearly meant the end of *Juiced*. That it's now made it to release is a good thing for Juice Games, although we're still not entirely sold on the whole 'bling' thing. Whatever happened to good old-fashioned gentlemen's racing?



ESSENTIALS

TOO MANY GAMES, NOT ENOUGH MONEY. THANKFULLY, NOT ALL OF THEM ARE WORTH SPENDING YOUR HARD-

gamesTM VIEWPOINT

FIRE EMBLEM

It's been a quiet month for the GameCube – so quiet, in fact, that we've had to resort to playing the import version of *Fire Emblem*, even though it's so heavy on the Japanese that we haven't a clue what's going on. That doesn't stop it from being great, though.



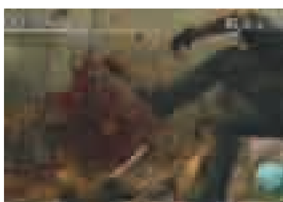
ALIEN HOMINID

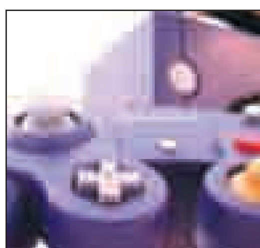
Finally, your chance has come – *Alien Hominid* is out here (on Xbox and PS2, at least) and, as Tim Westwood would say, 'you need it in your life' because 'it's officially a problem'. Or something like that. Either way, go buy it – it's only £20, after all.



RESIDENT EVIL 4

Yes, Nintendo, we know how well *Resident Evil 4* sold. We also know how, because of your silly distribution, we can't actually buy it anywhere on the high street. We'd say well done, but you'd probably miss the sarcasm thanks to the medium of print.





GAMECUBE

Manufacturer Nintendo
UK Launch Date
3 May 2002
Media
3-inch Optical Disc
Current Price £79.99

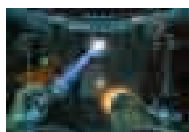
Though the GameCube seems destined to struggle, Nintendo's box of delights is still worth a look. While third-party support is dwindling, it's the first-party releases that really offer some quality gaming. Nintendo still makes some of the finest games ever, so missing out isn't really an option if you love videogames.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE GAMECUBE GAMES

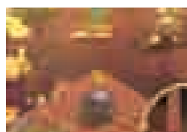
Title	Publisher	Developer	Comment
Animal Crossing	Nintendo	In-House	The only game to keep us playing for a full year
Alien Hominid IMPORT	03 Entertainment	The Behemoth	Hardcore 2D blasting with a sense of humour
Eternal Darkness	Nintendo	Silicon Knights	Scary in a different sense – very intriguing
F-Zero GX	Nintendo	Amusement Vision	Sega does it again with a brilliant retro remake
Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life	Ubisoft	Natsume	Highly absorbing – the *Animal Crossing* of farming games
Ikaruga	Treasure	In-House	Hard as nails and incredibly addictive
Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour	Nintendo	Camelot	Golfing fun without the need for Tiger Woods
Mario Kart: Double Dash!!	Nintendo	In-House	A grower, by all accounts – take your time and enjoy
Metroid Prime 2: Echoes	Nintendo	In-House	Another great 3D outing for our favourite female bounty hunter
Paper Mario: The Thousand Year Door	Nintendo	Intelligent Systems	Hugely entertaining and challenging at the same time
Pikmin 2	Nintendo	In-House	More flowery fun for those of a patient disposition
Resident Evil 4	Capcom	In-House	Reinvention on a scale that brings the series back to life
Soul Calibur II	Namco	In-House	The leader of the pack when it comes to swordplay
Super Mario Sunshine	Nintendo	In-House	Not perfect, but still a very fine Mario adventure
Super Monkey Ball 2	Sega	Amusement Vision	Monkeys and balls – what more could you want?
Tales Of Symphonia	Namco	In-House	An absolute beast of an RPG that will dominate your life
Viewtiful Joe 2	Capcom	In-House	A fine return for our favourite side-scrolling superhero
WarioWare: Mega Party Game$	Nintendo	In-House	A party game that'll have you rolling in the aisles
Zelda: Four Swords Adventures	Nintendo	In-House	The perfect excuse to have your friends round all the time
Zelda: The Wind Waker	Nintendo	In-House	Far better than its clueless detractors will have you believe

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN...

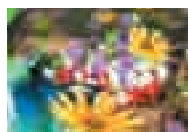
Metroid Prime 2: Echoes
It seems Retro Studios can do no wrong with the *Metroid* licence – *Echoes* is just as good as the original.



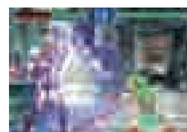
Super Monkey Ball 2
A close call as to which version of *Monkey Ball* is better, but four-player Monkey Target just pips it for us.



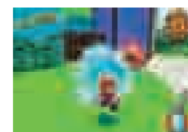
Pikmin 2
You can't say Nintendo doesn't try to be innovative – how many other companies make gardening games, eh?



Soul Calibur II
Admittedly, Namco's sequel isn't quite up to the standard of the original, but if you don't own a Dreamcast…



Super Mario Sunshine
Yes, we know – those damn blue coins are the worst idea ever. Still, you can't help but love the rest of the game.









EARNED CASH ON. IF YOU WANT TO TASTE THE CREAM OF THE CROP, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE

GBA

Manufacturer Nintendo **UK Launch Date** 22 June 2001
Media Flash Cartridge **Current Price** £69.99



Ideal for gaming on the move, the GBA is a cheap and effective way of getting games to those who don't have time to sit down and play. The leaps in handheld technology mean that GBA games are now more accomplished and can even be compared favourably to their console-based cousins. The lovely SP model is available in a variety of colours.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE GAME BOY ADVANCE GAMES

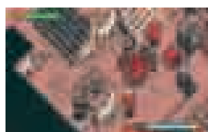
Title	Publisher	Developer
Advance Wars 2: Black Hole Rising	Nintendo	In-House
Astro Boy: Omega Factor IMPORT	Sega	Treasure
Boktai: The Sun Is In Your Hand	Konami	In-House
Castlevania: Aria Of Sorrow	Konami	In-House
Final Fantasy Tactics Advance	Nintendo	Square Enix
Fire Emblem	Nintendo	In-House
Golden Sun: The Lost Age	Nintendo	Camelot
Harvest Moon: Friends Of Mineral Town	Ubisoft	Natsume
Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga	Nintendo	AlphaDream
Mario Golf: Advance Tour	Nintendo	Camelot
Mario Vs Donkey Kong	Nintendo	In-House
Metroid: Zero Mission	Nintendo	In-House
Pokémon Pinball: Ruby And Sapphire	Nintendo	In-House
Pokémon Ruby / Sapphire	Nintendo	In-House
Shining Force: Resurrection Of The Dark Dragon	THQ	Sega
Street Fighter Alpha 3	Ubisoft	Crawfish
Super Mario Advance 3: Yoshi's Island	Nintendo	In-House
WarioWare: Twisted!	Nintendo	In-House
Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past/Four Swords	Nintendo	In-House
Legend Of Zelda: The Minish Cap	Nintendo	Capcom

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN…

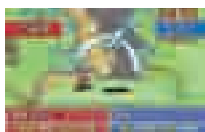
Golden Sun: The Lost Age
As far as handheld RPGs go, *Golden Sun* ranks up there as a favourite – we just hope there's a GameCube version on the way.



Boktai: Sun Is In Your Hand
An overlooked slice of great action adventuring from Hideo Kojima. If only we had more sunshine to play it with…

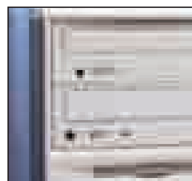


Fire Emblem
It might come a close second to *Advance Wars*, but there's no knocking Intelligent Systems' resurrection of this franchise.



PC

Manufacturer N/A **UK Launch Date** N/A
Media 4.75-inch CD/DVD Disc **Current Price** £variable



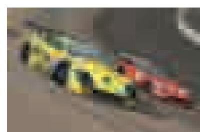
While primarily bought as a work platform, the PC has swiftly become the haven of the more 'mature' gamer. With its natural ability for online and LAN play, it's perfectly tailored for the FPS, strategy and MMORPG genres. However, it can cost a fortune to keep a PC up to date and running fast enough to support flashy graphics.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE PC GAMES

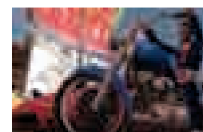
Title	Publisher	Developer
Battlefield Vietnam	EA	Digital Illusions
City Of Heroes	NCSoft	Cryptic Studios
Deus Ex	Eidos	Ion Storm
Far Cry	Ubisoft	Crytek
Football Manager 2005	Sega	Sports Interactive
Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas	Rockstar Games	Rockstar North
Grim Fandango	LucasArts	In-House
GTR – FIA GT Racing Game	Atari	SimBin Development
Half-Life 2	Vivendi	Valve Software
Hidden & Dangerous 2	Gathering	Illusion
Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising	Novalogic	In-House
Pro Evolution Soccer 4	Konami	In-House
Rise Of Nations	Microsoft	Big Huge Games
Rome: Total War	Activision	Creative Assembly
Sam & Max Hit The Road	Activision	LucasArts
Sensible World Of Soccer	Sensible Software	Renegade
Sid Meier's Pirates!	Atari	Firaxis Games
The Sims 2	EA	Maxis
Unreal Tournament 2004	Atari	Epic Games
World Of Warcraft	Vivendi	Blizzard

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN…

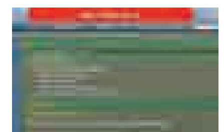
GTR – FIA GT Racing Game
A terrible name but a great attempt to recreate realistic racing on the PC. If you've got a good machine, it looks fantastic.



GTA: San Andreas
Out on the PC at long last, meaning all you would-be gangstas can 'absorb it into your dome'. Holla, and indeed, holla.



Football Manager 2005
Move over, *Championship Manager* – there's a new soccer maestro in town and he's got skills you've never seen before.



PERIPHERALS

EACH CONSOLE HAS THOSE MUST-HAVE PERIPHERALS. CAN YOU KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF THEM?

MOTOROLA A1000

Console: N/A
From: Motorola
Price: £Varies
(Free on contract)
Available: Now



Behold, the A1000 – essentially the answer to many of the demands of today's mobile phone user, thanks to there being a smartphone, megapixel camera and 3G video phone all tucked away inside its relatively compact shell. Plus it plays games – games that are some way beyond anything you've seen on mobiles before (including the N-Gage) and are only a fraction of the price. Its touch-screen technology removes the need for a keypad, leaving it free to have a bigger, high-definition screen capable of quality video playback or web browsing. It also can be rotated 90 degrees to make playing games easier too, with the directional stick and buttons all within easy reach; as you'd expect, games like *Lock N' Load* (*Doom* for the mobile generation) and *No Refuge* demonstrate how advanced the handset is. Best of all, though, the A1000 is currently available for nothing on a 3 contract – a bargain if ever there was one.

DDTS-100 DECODER

STYLISH SURROUND SOUND

Console: N/A
From: Creative Labs
Price: £119
Available: Now



Speaker systems these days are ridiculously cheap, and if you shop in the right places you can pick up a decent 5.1 surround sound set for as little as £60. Of course, actually having the speakers is one thing but if you want to rig them up you'll need a DTS decoder; it's only a small piece of kit, but an essential one if you want to get the best from your system. And Creative has just the thing you need – the DDTS-100 not only looks nice with its sleek silver finish, but also supports a number of advanced industry-standard audio formats including Dolby Digital EX, DTS-ES, DTS Neo:6 and Dolby Pro Logic 2. What's more, it has the ability to mix any stereo sound source up to 5.1 or 6.1 surround sound depending on your speakers, or even 7.1 if used with Creative's own 7.1 systems.

DIGITAL LCD MONITOR

THE OTHER PLAYSTATION PORTABLE

Console: PlayStation2
From: Joytech
Price: £109.99
Available: Now



Ever thought that miniature monitors for your consoles seem like a bit of an extravagance? Certainly, there's no denying that the ability to play on your favourite machine even when you haven't got access to a television is appealing, but the suggestion that the Xbox or even the old-style PlayStation2 were anywhere near portable is laughable. Now, though, we have the smaller, slimline PStwo and the idea of taking it with you wherever you go isn't so funny any more.

Leaping straight onto the PS2 monitor bandwagon, then – or rather, staying on it, considering the company already has a PS2 monitor on the market – is Joytech, with its new eight-inch digital LCD screen designed for the slimline PStwo. Locking straight onto the top of the unit and folding down for easy storage, the screen combined with the console is no bigger than a basic laptop; hence, the thought of a portable console now becomes a reality. Even better, the whole thing runs off a single power supply (piggybacking off the power for the PStwo) and can be plugged in using the bundled in-car adapter.

However, the key issue here is quality and, thankfully, the screen doesn't disappoint. Unlike Joytech's previous PS-specific screen, which was muddy and unimpressive, this new model follows on from the company's previous multi-purpose standalone seven-inch screen to deliver a high-quality LCD picture with equally impressive sound, thanks to the twin SRS 3D surround sound stereo speakers built into the unit.

The only real issue we could possibly have is the lack of alternate use; an optional Multi AV Adapter is available separately that allows you to attach the monitor to other video and audio sources, but otherwise the screen only works with the PStwo. That said, the slimline PStwo is the only console we can picture ourselves wanting to carry around with us anyway, so it's a minor gripe; when the screen essentially offers you the possibility of a portable games console and DVD player, you can't really complain – especially at such a decent price.


eMag

NEXT MONTH IN GAMES™

180 PAGES OF LEVELLING UP

We go behind the scenes at Nintendo to see just what Hyrule will have to offer in what could be the last great GameCube title

ON SALE 14 JULY 05

LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRI

NEXT MONTH

MORE… PREVIEWS

With so much of E3 left unmentioned even after this month's hulking previews section, next month we'll be bigging up the best of the rest – expect to read about the likes of *Burnout Revenge*, *StarCraft Ghost*, *Dead Or Alive 4*, *Kingdom Hearts 2* and a smattering of next-gen loveliness. We're too good to you, we really are.

MORE… REVIEWS

While we may be entering the quiet period when publishers foolishly assume that we'd rather be on the beach than working on maintaining our pale complexions, we'll still do our best to bring you verdicts on any and all available titles. *Killer7*? *Namco X Capcom*? *Battlefield 2*? *Conker: Live And Reloaded*? Sounds anything but quiet to us…

MORE… FEATURES

We're going Nintendo bonkers next month, bringing you an interview with Eiji Aonuma about everything from art to *Zelda* and a look inside one of Nintendo's internal studios. Then, of course, there's a new slant on the oft-tried, never perfected art of movies borrowing from games and vice versa. We'll be talking to both sides of the equation to try to solve the riddle. More, you say? Go on, then. How does an interview with Yuji Horii, the brains behind the *Dragon Quest* series sound? Yes, awesome is the right answer. All this and much more besides next month.

Please note: Due to circumstances beyond our control, we can't guarantee that the next issue will actually contain all these things. But it will definitely have *something* in it. Probably words. And some pictures.

NCESS

CONTACT

ILLUMINATING THE WORLD OF games™

Enough of what we think – this is where you get to show off your rapier wit to praise, criticise or mock the games industry

Making Contact

There are many wonderful ways to get in touch with games™. The traditional postal method is perfectly acceptable using the address below:

games™, Highbury Entertainment, Paragon House, St Peter's Road, Bournemouth, BH1 2JS

However, there are quicker ways to reach us thanks to the technological marvel that is the internet. Email us at this address: **gamestm@paragon.co.uk**

Alternatively, why not get yourself on our dedicated forum?

Step One:
Get yourself online. It's fairly simple, so we're sure you'll think of something.

Step Two:
Type the following into the browser window: **www.gamestm.co.uk**
You will arrive at the **games™** website. Nice, isn't it? Click on the 'forum' icon near the top of the page. If you're a first-time visitor to the forum you'll have to register before you can post. Just click 'register', fill in a few details (such as a username and password) and you're away.

Step Three:
Ha! There is no step three. It's that simple. Just choose which thread looks most interesting then post your deepest, darkest thoughts (preferably concerning gaming) in there. There's even a dedicated letters thread where you can post anything you'd like to see on these pages.

games™ reserves the right to edit letters for space and/or clarity. The views expressed in letters on these pages are those of the correspondents and not **games™**. If you want a healthy debate, we'll see you on the forum…

I'M DEPRESSED. GAMES don't excite me any more, and I know why. Forums are fantastic things, especially gaming ones. They're full of likeminded people who talk about likeminded things. They're also places to playfully speculate about the future. But the forums are part of the internet, which, gawd bless it, has become the bane of my life.

There just seem to be no surprises now. By the time the product reaches the shelves it's practically old news. Why? That blasted internet and its gaming sites. Everyone seems to have video footage or beta shots or interviews. The online reporter-developer relationship seems to be so close now that it appears that journos are living in Gabe Newell's pants. Add speculation and you get one big messy grey area of unanswered questions and Chinese whispers. And hype. Lots of hype.

This hype and speculation reaches me on a daily basis and, for the most part, I delight in treating it as such, playing with the ideas and possibilities that are to come. Unfortunately, with that I become the very thing that I despise: a hype machine. I work myself up into a frenzy over games that are months or years away, so that when I finally get to play them it's like I've already played an infinitely better version in my mind. Or worse, I get excited over a game that's in its beta stages only for it to get canned three months in.

I remember the pre-internet days of waiting for a monthly magazine to get my gaming news hit, and like most other things back then it was much simpler. There were very few grey areas, and controlled hype. There was an integrity that has been marred by the online speculator masked as a reporter. It makes me wonder exactly how much difference there is between the authenticity control of a magazine and an online newsletter. I definitely trust the printed word more. The quality is much better, and the proof reading and integrity is miles above some 'exclusive' holding games site (which is probably a hoax anyway).

Waiting once a month for good journalism is still better than bad journalism on a daily basis, not to mention waiting until the time is right before releasing news in the first place. Some things are better off behind the developer's closed doors. Maybe ignorance is bliss after all.

Pete Williams

games™: Oh, shush, the internet is our playground and we'll hear none of your complaints. Just think of the web like the telly – you don't have to visit certain sites if you don't want to and some restraint is required. But you don't think that even the spoilers are a bit exciting? Just a little bit?

I'M SURE YOU'RE all excited about the DS, PSP, Xbox 360 and so on. But in your rush to explore new consoles aren't you forgetting about the most important thing in gaming? It's not in the news, it's not only available through import in two years' time and it's not packed with exciting new features. The most important thing in gaming is sitting under your TV. It's your PS2, Cube or Xbox.

Before you think I'm some crazed loon forgetting the benefits of new technology, let me remind you of the fate of the PSone. The most successful console in the world, everyone knew that a follow-up was going to happen. But while all eyes were on the

"OUR CURRENT CONSOLES ARE COMPETENT ENOUGH, AREN'T THEY? WHY SHOULD WE HAVE TO BUY NEW SYSTEMS **FOR THE SAKE OF SLIGHTLY SHINIER GRAPHICS?"**

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Look, if you don't like the gossip and crummy articles, don't read the internet. As it happens, we rather like it. It's got all the fun.



People already claim to be underwhelmed by the Revolution's design, but it's a vast improvement over the handbag-esque Cube.

advance of Sony's black monolith, no-one noticed the flow of great PSone games slow to a trickle. Suddenly the devoted community had to hype up titles like the limp *Hawk* clone *Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX* and the over-ambitious, mediocre *Driver 2* as classics. Promising games like *Onimusha* and *The Getaway* (I said promising, not brilliant) were ported onto the new format.

With the launch of the PS2, the PSone had *Final Fantasy IX* as a last great game, then had its coders abandon it, creating lacklustre PS2 games like *Tekken Tag* and *Ridge V* for a tiny user base, neglecting the millions of PSone owners. Not even a trendy redesign could save it from extinction. *Official PlayStation Magazine* put games like the disastrous *C-12* and even a *Creatures* title (the precursor to which had scored 1/10 in the same magazine) on the cover. The forums dried up and sales bombed. Is this going to happen with our beloved consoles? With Microsoft all but deserting its first baby after this year, it seems that way.

But why does it have to be like this? Our consoles are competent enough, aren't they? Why should we have to buy new systems for the sake of slightly shinier graphics? If Sony, Nintendo and Microsoft lose money on sales, why are they so keen to make a move that serves no purpose? The PSone wasn't perfect, it had room for improvement, but the Cube, Xbox and PS2 have years of life left in them beyond the kart racers and platformers they are sure to be left with. Your console deserves better. Stand by your consoles and lead the way to a better gaming future.

James Searle

games™: It's fair to say that most developers and publishers abandoned the last generation of hardware a little too early, but it's something they seem to have realised. Though some will be lured away by the new technology, even Microsoft remains committed to the Xbox for at least another two years, and you can bet that many of the more shrewd publishers will keep pumping out games for all viable platforms for many years yet. As such, you can be certain that you'll be enjoying games on pretty much all the existing platforms for a good while.

TO THE LADS from the forum who got their comments on girl gamers printed in issue 32 – you guys might not be able to find girls who like games, but I have found many guys are put off by girls who are 'hardcore gamers', and even if they are interested they won't take us seriously. Most guys seem to just want 'casual gamer' girls – ones who will play a bit of *GTA*, *Gran Turismo*, *Halo* or whatever's the big game of the moment – but not one who will play for hours on end to



CONTACT

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Enough of what we think, this is where you lot get to show off your rapier wit to praise, criticise or mock the games industry

Text Life

Ive just seen xbox360 on your website and hope it doesnt look like this come E3 its ugly and basic looking and if it does itd better b damn powerful
g™: It's powerful and beautiful, so worry not.

Project zero in xbox top twenty?I know its your opinion so let me give you mine,it is utter gash and not scary, What about top spin or panzer dragoon.
g™: Thanks for that, but we compile the essentials list and we're better than you.

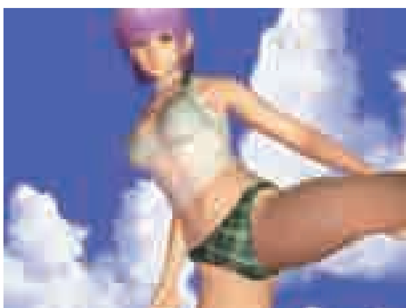
If I own PGR2, Rallisport Challenge 2 & Burnout 3& love all 3 of these games,do I need 2 get GT4 as well?
g™: GT4 is rather beautiful, and it's also regarded as the finest racer to date. If you're such a huge racing game fan it'd rude to miss out on it, wouldn't it?

R there any differences between Cube & PS2 versions of viewtiful joe eg the Dante character in the first game or r they identical?I want 2 know which 1 2 get.
g™: Get the GameCube version. Right now it could do with the support.

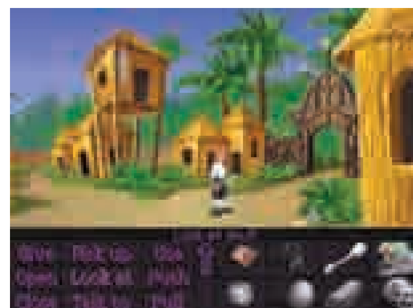
I think that gamesTM should have more competitions and more free gifts.
g™: Yep, absolutely. We'll have some stickers next issue, and some sweets the issue after that… Now go away.

I keep putting off moving out of my Dads house.Because when I do I know I wont b able 2 afford all the video games I want.Is there a shelter 4 people like me?
g™: Get a job, save wisely, learn to live without every game ever. Go on – you can do it.

Is it true that Resident Evil 4 is making an appearance on XBOX.Does that also mean the others will follow?
g™: Apparently this is true, and yes, it does suggest that other Capcom greats will be Xbox-bound. Just don't tell Nintendo…



Lovely ladies play games as well as star in them, but images like this aren't really helping anyone. Apart, perhaps, from the very lonely.



LucasArts coverage is always going to be a winner, so expect some more of it in the future. And three-headed monkeys.

complete their perfect clear file (although she must be able to understand when a guy wishes to do just that) or, horror of horrors, be able to show the guy up on a game in front of his mates! So, yeah, us girls don't have much luck either.

Anyway, I have been reading **games™** since issue one, but missed issues 27 to 29 – any chance of being able to get back issues of your great magazine? And now I'm off to mourn my old Commodore VIC-20 and 64 which I just found out my Mum has thrown out as I "wasn't using them". From now on I shall guard my retro systems much more carefully!
Anastasia Demi

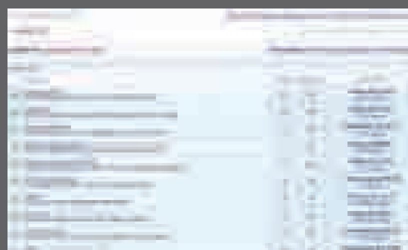
games™: The forum comments weren't really about the lack of girls playing games but rather the portrayal of ladies in games – we're a little more sophisticated than that (or we'd like to think so). But maybe it's because of the way women are presented in games that blokes are surprised to find a 'hardcore' lady gamer. Still, it's great to hear from a female gamer who's been with us since day one, and yes, you can get back issues – give our customer services people a call (01202 200200) and they should be able to get you the issues you need.

APPLE MAKES PRODUCTS that look really nice and also have plenty of power. For example, the new Apple Mac Mini looks cool and sleek compared to a Dell PC and is equally powerful, so on first impressions the general public will go for the Apple. So why does Nintendo (as my preferred console developer) insist on making crap looking consoles? Look at the N64 – it's a big black box. And the GameCube looks so childish and, well, purple. Why can't Nintendo make its consoles white with a tasteful logo on them and buttons that don't stand out?

This crapness of design has carried on to the DS. I know I'm very lucky to have one but it is so plasticky and the buttons are rubbish – they're just too small. I was pleased to see that the Wavebird had a nice design, but Nintendo and the other console manufacturers still need to take some tips from good old Apple.
George Jennings

games™: The unveiling of the Revolution should have cheered you up no end, as it appears to have taken a leaf out of Jonathan Ive's design book. Notwithstanding the high-quality games that will no doubt come with Nintendo's next console, we've got a funny warm feeling about finally having a stylish Nintendo machine.

I DON'T OFTEN buy games magazines. They seem to be full of adverts and 16-year-old editors raving about the latest shoot-'em-up. But yesterday I bought a copy of



FROM THE FORUM

WHAT GAMES DO YOU LOVE THAT NO-ONE'S HEARD OF?

Petrolhead
Just wondering if anyone's ever really taken a risk by buying a really obscure game that's received little media coverage but found it to be (strangely) enjoyable? People who've played crazy stuff like *Mad Maestro* will know what I mean. In short bursts I found it quite amusing yet I've heard little of it – maybe for good reason.

Retro gangsta
Jade Cocoon for the PSone (not the shitty PS2 sequel). It got really bad reviews but I liked the demo and then bought the game. One of the best games I've ever played, and I encourage you lot to buy it as well.

voice of reason
I think my most recent obscurity was *Flipnic* on PS2 and it's absolutely great. It's pinball but in the style of that bit in *Sesame Street* when it went "12345, 678910, 11, 12". Tremendous fun and so highly recommended it's untrue.

RivaOni
I can't remember how much media attention it got but I always enjoyed multiplayer games of *Red Dog* on the Dreamcast

wholehole
Gregory Horror Show was quite cool trying to work out how to get those souls.

Xephon
Gregory Horror Show is class! I refuse to trade it in – creepy and cute at the same time, not many games you can say that about… Apart from that, how about *Freak Out, Gungrave, Klonoa 2, Nightshade, Silpheed, SOS:The Final Escape, Magic Pengel* (NTSC)…

toythatkills
Graffiti Kingdom, the sequel to *Magic Pengel*, is supposedly getting a PAL release.

Hong Kong Phooey
I've recently bought *Electroplankton* for the DS but I've yet to have a go. Should be interesting.

exoneuk
I ended up buying some unknown game (unknown to me anyway) called *Matrimelee*. Someone told me it was a wedding simulator so my girlfriend was pestering me. Shame I didn't research it although I do still play it too often. And by often I mean, get to the last boss and then curse at the screen. I'd class *Bombastic* as an obscure title because I think only a dozen people bought it. My flatmate reached level 100 and I hate him for it… Would *Klonoa* class as an obscure title? The PS2 version and the Volleyball PSone game. If so, I have those too – I have such a weird collection.

games™. I was amazed! At last there seems to be a magazine aimed at people like me. I'm not a die-hard games player but I like to keep up to date. I have a son who plays his PS2 daily but my preference is old LucasArts adventures (I run the Zak McKracken Archive – http://homepage.ntlworld.com/tolworthy/zak/).

So here I am in the newsagent, browsing the latest games magazines to see what's new. Most of them are the same old stuff – thin magazine, cover disc that doesn't interest me, lots of ads, endless reviews of the same old games written by teenagers… It's such a shame that most of the gaming world is ignored.

Then I picked up **games™**. The first thing I noticed was the stronger, simpler cover. Less flashy, a more mature look and feel. Then I noticed the weight – lots of pages. A quick flick through showed not many ads and the breadth of coverage almost sold me. This magazine seemed to cover more than just *GTA*.

Then I saw the retro section. The big retro section. And it took retro seriously – not as a historical oddity for cultists, but as games that are still worth playing today. So I bought the magazine. On the way out of the shop I noticed a big article on some obscure Japanese game – good grief! A games magazine that's aware of the rest of the world – incredible!

I noticed that there were two adventure games in the top 20 must-have PC games. As an adventure fan I'm tired of being told that adventure is dead. I realise that there are many more genres than that, but two out of the top 20 seemed about right. And then what do I find? Issue 33 has a feature on old LucasArts games. Okay, you got me. For the first time in my life I will be buying two consecutive issues of a games magazine. If the next issue is as good as the last, you can expect a subscription.
Chris Tolworthy

games™: We like satisfied customers, we like them a lot. Could you spread the word for us? Tell 10,000 of your mates to buy the mag too and you can have that subscription for free… Incidentally, this month we've only covered *Day Of The Tentacle* in the Retro section, so stay tuned for more LucasArts japery.

DAMN YOU, GAMES™, your multiformat magazine has corrupted my naïve, simple tastes. Once I was happy with the latest Nintendo console and a handful of titles, shunning the Mega Drive and PlayStation as mere gaming folly. But one fateful day I was drawn to your magazine, with its seductive glossy cover, intelligently written content and adult persona. Soon I was craving *Vice City*, *PES* and *Gran Turismo*.

I could curb my urges no longer and, much to my wife's horror, a second console appeared under the telly. Now my eyes were opened. So many games for Cube and PS2, and so little time. Sitting through *Footballers' Wives* while my two consoles lay dormant was more than I could bear, so I had to buy a telly for the bedroom. My habit has gone from bad to worse. Your retro coverage has made me very bitter about the mint condition NES, SNES and N64 I sold for a pittance, and when out shopping my wife has caught me staring hungrily at the Xbox displays.

For the sake of my wallet and marriage please help me. Is there a cure for this multiformat madness?
Andy Dingwall

games™: We can't help it if we've broadened your gaming palette – it's what we're here for. But you might like to remind your wife that there are worse ways of spending your time, like in the company of another lady. You win.

"WHY DOES NINTENDO INSIST ON MAKING CRAP LOOKING CONSOLES? IT NEEDS TO TAKE SOME TIPS FROM GOOD OLD APPLE"



Advice is least heeded when it is most needed

games™

Source: MCV 20/05/05